Famous Artists Course

Famous Artists Schools, Inc., Westport, Connecticut

Landscapes and interiors

Lesson 11

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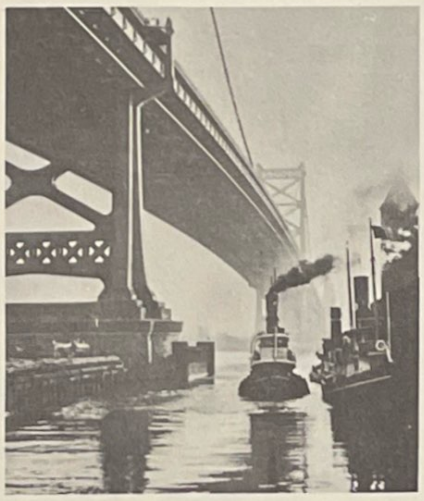
Landscape, whether man's or nature's, is all around you. Study it wherever you go. Carefully observed and thoughtfully used, it can give conviction to your pictures.



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Landscapes

Nature has always been one of the artist's most valuable and inspiring teachers. Her dappled birches, somber pines, and rolling meadows – the strong stone faces of her cliffs, her turbulent waterfalls – her skies now black with angry clouds and now bright blue and smiling – here is a treasure house of images from which the artist can emerge with his imagination enriched and his sketchbook full.

Go to nature often. No matter how creative you may be or how original your landscapes are, in time your ideas will wear thin. The same trees, rocks, and skies, no matter how you recombine them in different pictures, are still the same skies, rocks, and trees. Nature has others in infinite supply. Take them from her and use them to refresh your mind and your pictures.

The imaginative artist never takes nature just as he finds her. Nature is too accidental. Her rich, exciting forms and textures are all around you in the landscape, but they are not organized, they lack an artistic plan. If you copy, you copy confusion. Instead, you must create, redesign, and rearrange the scenes that nature offers you. "Art," Emile Zola said, "is nature seen through a temperament." The landscape subject must be filtered through the personality of the artist, who purifies and strengthens it.

Controlling the viewer's mood

A landscape in nature or in a picture never exists apart from feeling. Each different mood or aspect of nature has an emotional association for us. A sense of vast space and silence broods over the endless reaches of the plains or the desert. On the edge of a vast canyon or at the foot of a towering mountain, man feels the grandeur of nature and his own insignificance. In a dark, stagnant swamp, with the mist rising from the water and the weeping willows drooping all around, the atmosphere is sinister and dismal. By contrast, a trout stream is clear and bubbling, its ripples glitter in the sun – the feeling is one of cheer, a call to brisk activity.

You can control the response of your audience by making use of these emotional associations. But keep in mind that you cannot create a convincing illusion of a real scene unless you first put yourself right where you want the audience to stand – unless you yourself feel what you want them to feel.

From this moment, begin to look at landscapes with a sharper awareness. Experience the space of the plains or the hemmed-in feeling of the city when you travel through them. Feel the darkness of the deep woods, the sunlight and sparkle of the trout brook. Analyze your feelings in each place – and, above all, note what characterizes each locale – what makes it a particular place and no other. The scene, deeply felt, closely observed, and thoughtfully re-created, will communicate your impressions clearly and forcefully to your audience.

Landscape as background

As an illustrator, you will rarely paint a picture in which the landscape itself is the chief subject. The main purpose of the landscape is to set the scene or locale for figures or products which are the real center of interest. Used this way, the landscape tells the viewer the where of the picture. If, in the setting, the sun is glaring overhead, if the leaves are thick upon the ground, or if there is a medieval castle with baronial banners flying, it will also tell the viewer the when of the picture. And if, as occasionally happens, the setting shows a forest all ablaze or great rocks rolling down a mountainside, it will help reveal the why and what of the picture. The landscape, in a commercial picture, is usually secondary, but it can be important.

Landscape, even as a background, must look genuine. It must do for the illustration what the "location" does for a motion picture. A movie cast and crew often go on "location" – go to the actual scene of their story – to provide an authentic background for the players. For the same reason, your picture setting should suggest a real landscape somewhere. It cannot consist of "small trees of some kind" or "a sort of hill." It must show trees and hills appropriate to the setting. As an illustrator, you will be expected to show a convincing scene anywhere in the world, at any time of day, under any kind of weather conditions.

This is by no means as formidable as it sounds. First of all, you have access to photographs of places. They show you the appearance of the location clearly and accurately. Second, in most pictures, all that you need is a suggestion of a certain locale. Unless you are required to show a well-known place, there is no need for a literal, detailed painting made from a specific viewpoint. Often you can quickly suggest the scene by using a symbol. Trafalgar Square, London Bridge, the Houses of Parliament – these are symbols of London; a hitching post and swinging doors unfailingly suggest the Old West; magnolias, and wide-spreading live oaks with Spanish moss hanging from their branches instantly say "the South." The symbol or suggestion can say where just as fast as a detailed representation.

Although symbols are helpful, they can be overdone. Repeated use of the same obvious symbol tells of an imagination run dry. The Eiffel Tower immediately places the scene in Paris, but you will bore your audience if you place the Eiffel Tower in every Parisian background you draw. There are many other equally effective symbols that can and should be used – the city's picturesque buildings, its neat parks, colorful markets, cobblestone streets, centuries-old churches and cathedrals, the bridges over the Seine. With these you can create many fresh and exciting views of Paris.

Selecting precisely the right background to identify your locale is as much a matter of judgment as it is of artistic taste. You must make sure that any setting you use is truly characteristic of the place you want to suggest. Even a photograph taken right on the spot may not satisfy this requirement completely. If the setting is a slum, right in the middle of your actual slum photo you may find a smart new apartment house. Leave it out! If the picture setting is Florida, the photos you work from should really look like Florida – and not like the Midwest. Your setting must establish the locale clearly. If your photos don't do this, help them by editing out any false notes.

Fitting it into the picture

A setting must not only tell where – it must tell where in good pictorial terms. The landscape is part of the over-all picture, and should support it in its forms, its textures, its composition. The scene may be Florida, and palm trees say "Florida," but if their size and shape detract from your figures you must try something else. Move the trees aside or into the distance or use some other tropical plants or bushes that will both identify the locale and help the composition.

A landscape background is never something hastily brushed in to fill up the white space behind the characters. In the practice of the best artists it is thoughtfully researched and carefully planned. Every element is weighed for its contribution to the values, balance, mood, and meaning of the total picture. And when these elements are all put properly together the landscape is suddenly there – not interfering but telling the viewer the where and when of the picture and giving it clarity and strength.

Every region has a character and a mood

Often a picture situation calls for a landscape in a particular region and no other. The landscape must set the scene – tell the viewer exactly where the action is taking place. The artist who plans his landscape thoughtfully can make it reveal the where of the picture just as surely as if he painted the name of the place on a sign in the scene.

North, South, East, West – every part of the country has its own characteristics by which we recognize it. Every region has its typical terrain, trees, bushes, flowers, and buildings. To identify your locale clearly, you must be careful in your selection of these elements. If the setting of your picture is the Midwest, where the land is flat, obviously it would be misleading to show a hilly terrain and a Cape Cod house, both of which are typical of New England.

Every place has its typical moods, too. In the deserts of the Southwest the feeling is all aridity, aloneness, heat. In the Midwest the fertile wheat-covered plains suggest a feeling of golden plenty and spaciousness. These moods vary with different times. New England at summer's height is rich and green, but its wintry mood may be stark and bare or wonderfully vigorous and bright with sunlight sparkling on the snow. Keep mood in mind when you draw a place, and try to capture the feeling of it.

Naturally you cannot know all of the common features or moods of each region you may be called upon to show in a picture. Nor can you travel to every "location" you need to use (though this would be ideal if practical). You must, however, keep your eyes and ears open and store away all the information you can about the characteristics of various areas. Photographs, books, movies, television – all these are good sources of information to the illustrator. Keep them in mind and use them well.

A northern pine wood has an upward-thrusting, spirelike pattern. The mood is one of alertness and vitality.

By contrast, the hanging growth of a swamp forest in the Deep South creates a feeling of stagnation and gloom.

The craggy, rock-lined shore of Maine has a stark quality. Everything is bleak and bare.

The coastline of a sandy tropical island is soft and undulating. A feeling of warmth and ease prevails.

A midwestern farm, with its vast fields of waving grain and flat horizon, suggests sunlight and the bounty of nature.

A farm set in the rolling hills and tree-covered mountains of New England has a rugged mood and character.

Make your landscape elements specific

A tree in a landscape is not just a tree, a house is not just a house. Every tree, house, or other landscape element has its own particular characteristics. You must know these characteristics and draw them to create an effective and convincing setting.

An apple tree has more than apples – it has a somewhat stunted trunk and twisted branches. The red cedar has a slender form that slopes steeply upward, but the outline of the hemlock is wide and irregular. Every style of architecture, too – modern, Colonial, Victorian, etc. – has its own special characteristics that the artist should study and understand.

Never put in just "some kind" of tree or building simply to fill the picture space. Generalities only weaken the scene. You must have the curiosity to find out the specific character of your landscape elements if you want to attract the viewer's interest.

Numbers and shapes

The characteristic shape or silhouette of objects like trees or houses always asserts itself even when we group many objects of the same kind together. The group tends to take on the character of a larger version of the single object. The thing which has a pattern that is basically a filigree remains that way; the rectangular, hard-edged form retains its blocky character even in groups. Keep this in mind when you go from the single object to groups of the same object.

The apple tree has branches which twist and sprawl to form an irregular, soft-edged, horizontal shape.

Two or three apple trees create the same basic shape. More branches simply make the tone more solid.

A whole apple orchard – but notice that its over-all character is quite like that of the single tree.

The house stands out as a geometric, man-made form. Wall, roof, and window shapes are basically rectangular. Now let's add a few more houses to this one.

Added buildings enlarge and repeat the rectangular shape of the single house. Their regular forms contrast sharply with nature's irregularity.

If we view a whole town, this geometric quality becomes stronger and more insistent. The basic feeling of regular, angular forms persists.

Keep your eyes open

Before you make any picture with a specific locale, you should check into the exact character of the background. Take nothing for granted. There are more differences in landscape elements than can readily be imagined. Here we suggest a few.

Mountains exist in more than one shape. The character of the Smokies, for example, is different from that of the Rocky Mountains. If your subject is set in one of these places, do not draw the kind of mountain that is found in the other. Or suppose your picture calls for a wooded background. You should know the exact character of the woods in question. You would not want to show a natural woodland where the actual setting is a neat, trim country estate or a city park. Should the setting be a river bank, it will be very helpful to know just what kind of river. The Mississippi is miles wide in some places, but a trout stream is narrow, and each has its own particular type of trees and plants on its banks.

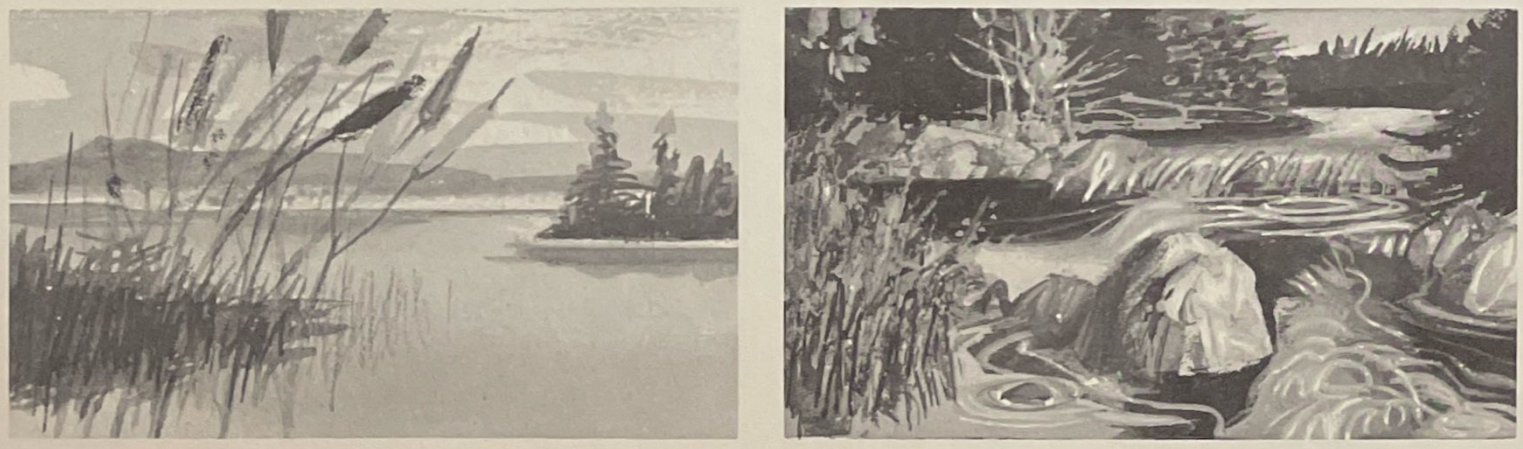
Never neglect an opportunity to observe the character of landscape elements wherever you go. See what distinguishes one kind of river, seashore, or city street from others in different places. You can accumulate a great amount of valuable knowledge by careful observation. And, sooner or later, you will be able to put it to good use in a picture.

Mountains

Mountains differ markedly in their character. Some, as in the western scene at the left, are angular and jagged, and individual peaks may rise to great heights. Others — you see some in the eastern scene at the right — have forms that are more rolling and hilly. Notice that there is also a difference in the character of the trees in these two contrasting landscapes.

Trees

These two pictures contain the same basic elements, but one is very definitely a park and the other a scene along a country road. Notice the difference in the trees in the two pictures. The park trees are cared for by man, whose attentions greatly affect their form and character. Where the trees have been left alone their growth may be unbalanced — some branches successfully reach sunlight, others stay in the shade and are stunted or dead. The park grass, kept smooth and even, is completely different from the weed-choked, knee-high growth that spreads uncontrolled through the brush and wood.



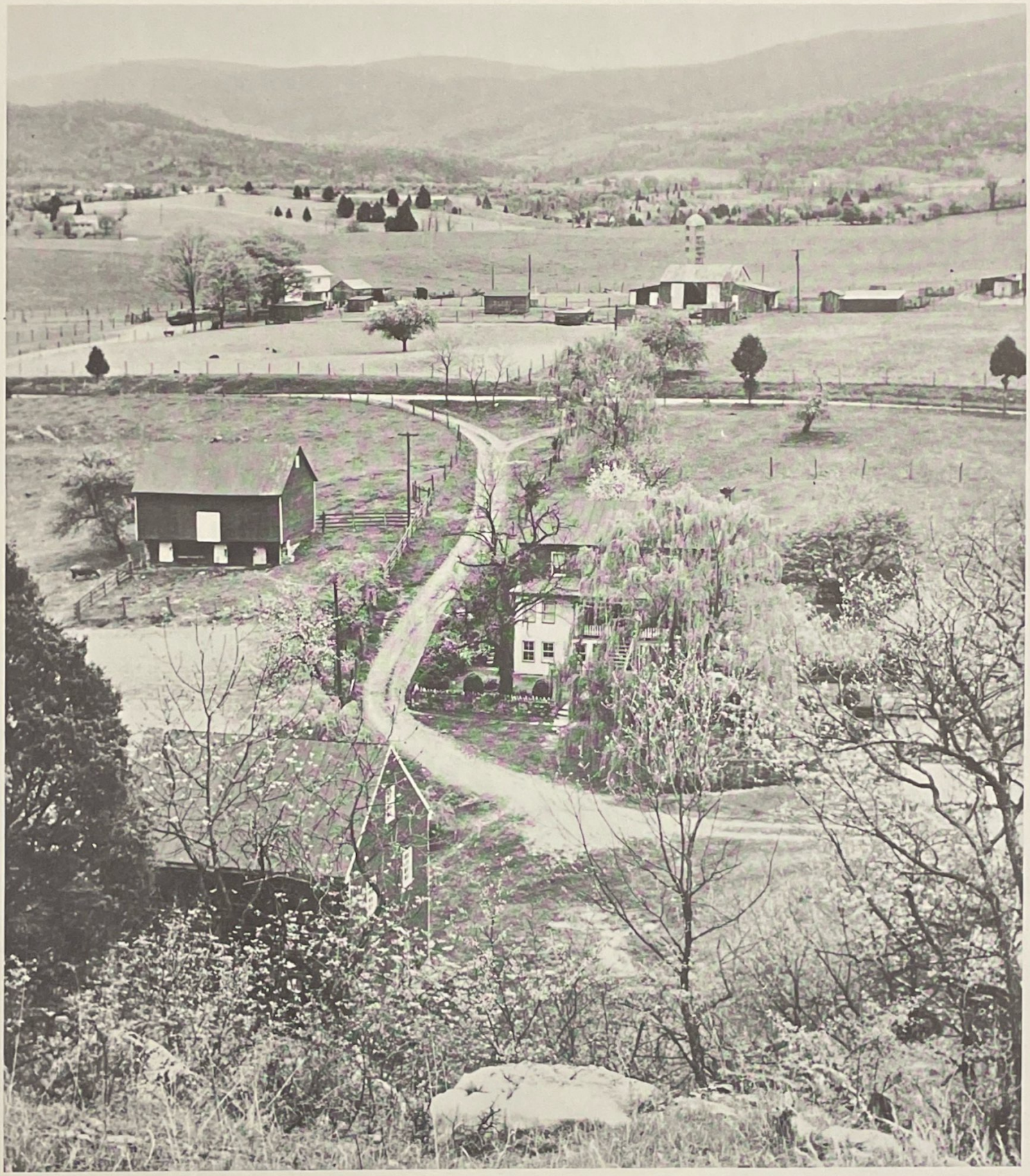
Rivers

Rivers and streams are among nature's most varied and interesting forms. Huge, slow-moving rivers like the Mississippi *(left)*, so wide that the distant shore is only dimly seen, are one thing — a rushing trout stream so narrow it can be covered by a fisherman's cast is quite another. Quite opposite, too, are the moods of the lazy river that steamers ply and the stream where the water twists and tumbles rapidly along.

Select the characteristic elements in the landscape

Here is a view of a countryside in the South — a photo that is typical of the reference material available to artists. Working from it, you might be able to establish a convincing southern locale for an illustration. But not without editing.

Although this photo was taken in the South, it is misleading, and a far cry from a carefully planned scene in an illustration. Different parts of the picture suggest different parts of the country. As an illustrator, you must select the most appropriate section of a photo and develop it, often adding things from other photos. Remember that your landscape must tie in with the average viewer's notions of the locale — and only by selecting really characteristic elements can you be sure that it will.



These sections could be found in many other parts of the country — in New England or the Midwest, for example. They are not untypical, but they are not typical enough to help identify the locale.

This particular area of the picture has the feeling we associate with the South. The willow, with its heavy, hanging foliage hiding most of the house, is a typical feature, and so is the high porch. Here we have something that can be used to create a convincing southern scene.

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Landscapes and interiors

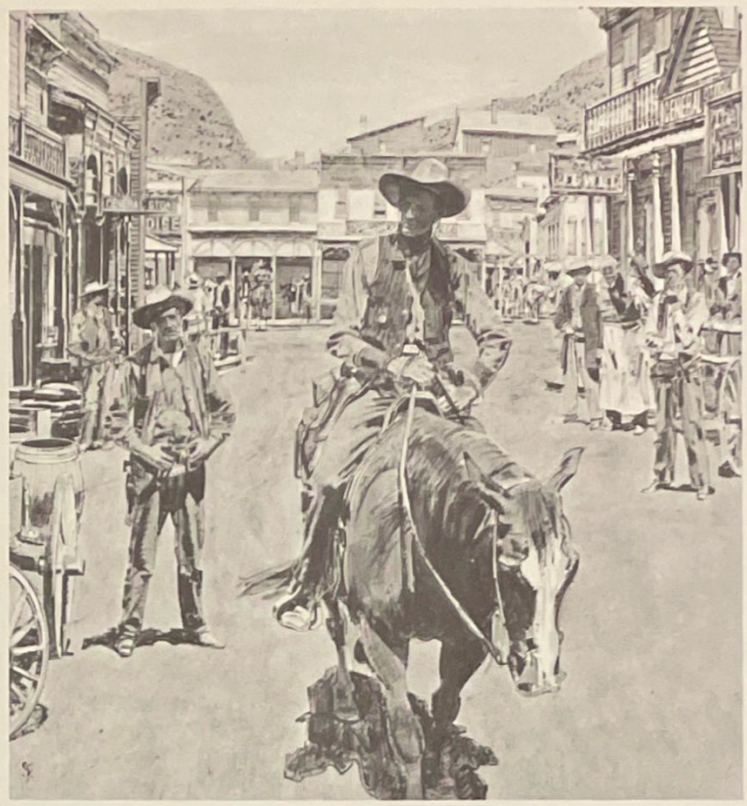
Courtesy Coca-Cola Co

VENICE — Jack Potter: This illustration was one of a series in an advertising campaign planned to show that the product featured was popular throughout the world. The landscape, therefore, was virtually as important to the illustration as the product. Here Jack Potter, working in a flat, decorative style, shows quickly recognized highlights of the Venetian scene — gondolas on the Grand Canal, the Doge's palace with its lacy pattern, St. Mark's Cathedral, the clock tower and the column surmounted by the winged lion.

LONDON — Eric Blegvad: Here is a little London scene very different in character from the usual picture of the city that comes to mind, with Big Ben, Piccadilly and the Thames. At the same time the locale is unmistakably English, as proclaimed by the many chimney pots, the car parked on the "wrong" side of the street, the bicycle at the curb, the signs, and the typical brick stores, cottages, and picket fences. Eric Blegvad's style contributes a definite feeling of quaintness and age to the scene.

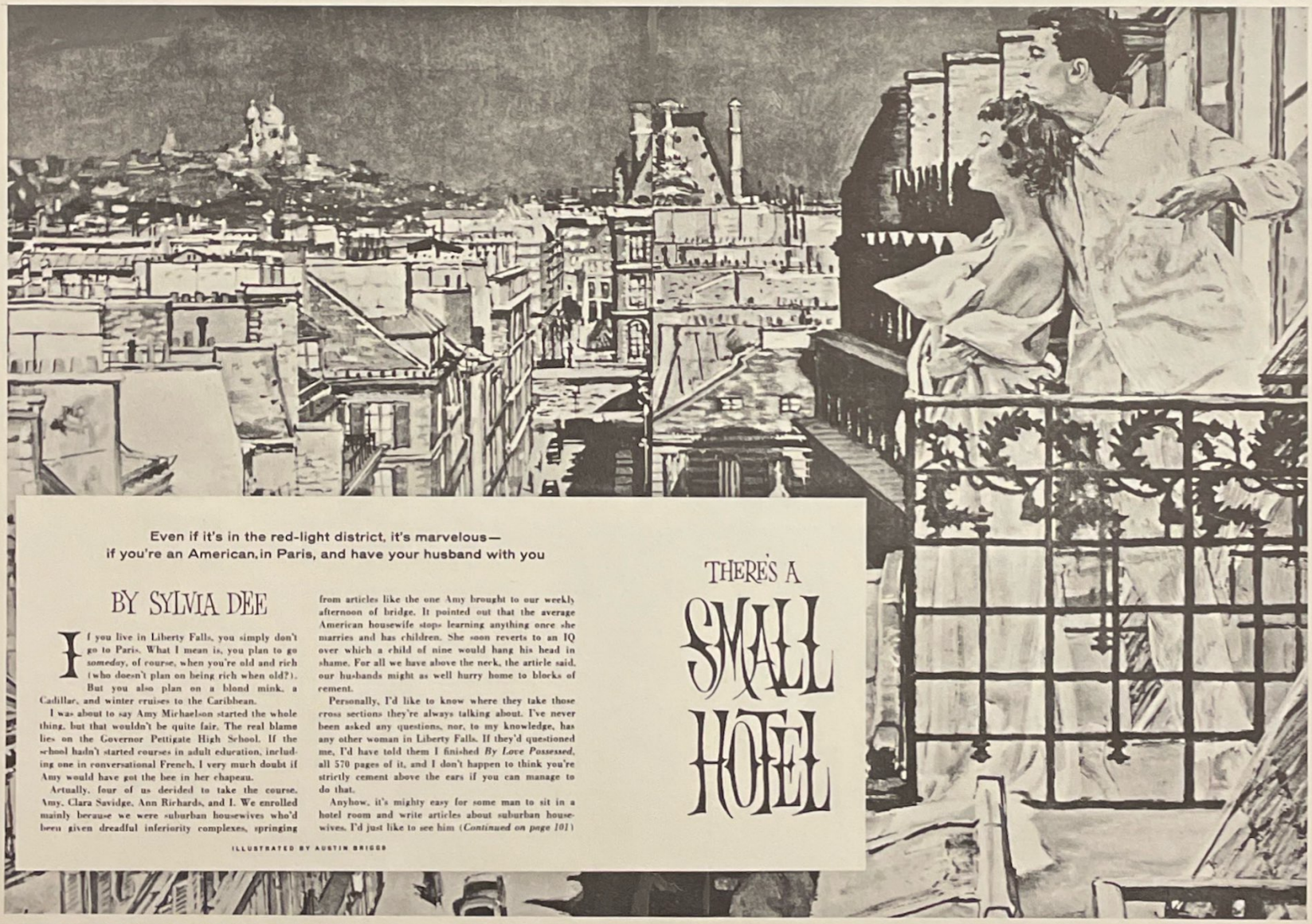
Courtesy Standard Oil Co.

CONNECTICUT — Stevan Dohanos: For this picture of a small New England town in the spring the artist has selected a scene with many characteristic features. The colonial buildings, the stately elms, the evergreens and other trees, the railroad track running over the paved main street, and the rolling hills in the distance all help to set the locale.



THE OLD WEST — Robert Fawcett: There can be no confusing this western town with the New England scene at the left. The main street is dry and dusty and lined with wooden buildings, each with its porch and hitching rail. The brush-studded hills in the background are steep and arid and lend a further touch of realism to the scene.

Courtesy Good Housekeeping



Even if it's in the red-light district, it's marvelous—
if you're an American, in Paris, and have your husband with you

THERE'S A SMALL HOTEL

BY SYLVIA DEE

If you live in Liberty Falls, you simply don't go to Paris. What I mean is, you plan to go *someday*, of course, when you're old and rich (who doesn't plan on being rich when old?). But you also plan on a blond mink, a Cadillac, and winter cruises to the Caribbean.

I was about to say Amy Michaelson started the whole thing, but that wouldn't be quite fair. The real blame lies on the Governor Pettigate High School. If the school hadn't started courses in adult education, including one in conversational French, I very much doubt if Amy would have got the bee in her chapeau.

Actually, four of us derided to take the course. Amy, Clara Savidge, Ann Richards, and I. We enrolled mainly because we were suburban housewives who'd been given dreadful inferiority complexes, springing from articles like the one Amy brought to our weekly afternoon of bridge. It pointed out that the average American housewife stops learning anything once she marries and has children. She soon reverts to an IQ over which a child of nine would hang his head in shame. For all we have above the neck, the article said, our husbands might as well hurry home to blocks of cement.

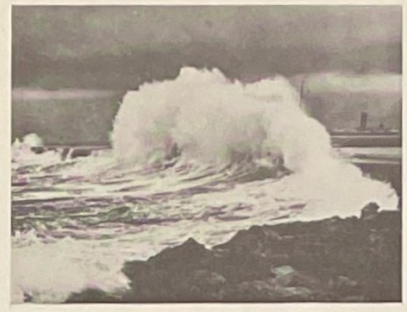
Personally, I'd like to know where they take those cross sections they're always talking about. I've never been asked any questions, nor, to my knowledge, has any other woman in Liberty Falls. If they'd questioned me, I'd have told them I finished *By Love Possessed*, all 570 pages of it, and I don't happen to think you're strictly cement above the ears if you can manage to do that.

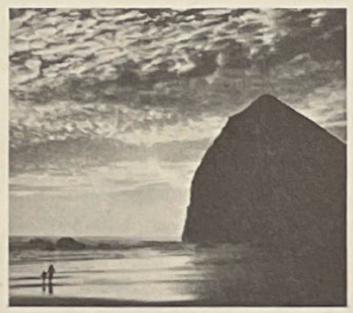
Anyhow, it's mighty easy for some man to sit in a hotel room and write articles about suburban housewives. I'd just like to see him (*Continued on page 101*)

ILLUSTRATED BY AUSTIN BRIGGS

PARIS — Austin Briggs: In this rooftop picture of Paris, Austin Briggs has thoughtfully emphasized the characteristic mansard roofs, the pattern of small chimneys, the iron grillework of the balcony, and, at the left, the Sacré-Coeur basilica, a famous landmark, in the distance. They all add up to an unusual and interesting view of a well-known place.

The scene is always changing. Morning follows night, spring follows winter, sunshine follows storm. Each time of day, season, and kind of weather have typical moods that help express different picture situations.





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Time and the elements

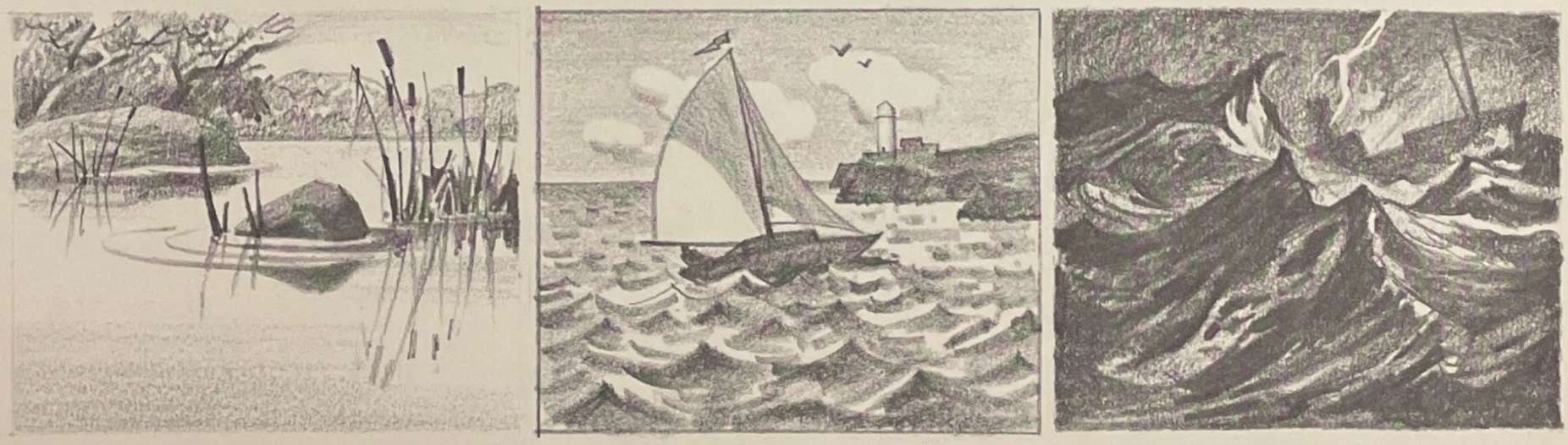
The pictures on the opposite page are intended to remind you that landscape is not something fixed and unchanging. Although it has a basic character, it is subject to wind, weather, and time. In the stealthy light of dawn, the bright glare of noon, and the sunset that flames up and slowly dies, the landscape takes on different aspects and moods. It changes with the seasons, too.

Time and the elements are valuable tools for any artist. By using them adroitly, you can give your landscapes much more meaning. A storm in the background can underline the stormy temperament of the figure in the foreground or strengthen the excitement of a dramatic action. Sunlight can fill a landscape with brightness and gaiety, just as darkness can shroud it in gloom.

The changing forms of nature. Nature is always changing, always different — and nowhere more than in clouds and water. In a picture their specific forms not only help reveal the weather of a scene — they also offer the artist shapes and textures he can use to make his compositions more effective.

Pay particular attention to the clouds, water, and other landscape elements that show the effects of time and the weather. When you use these effects, make sure they are consistent. Never put stormy waves in a picture meant to portray a calm sea. Remember, wind that blows waves will also influence cloud formations, smoke, a boat's sails, and flags. You, and you alone, can train yourself to see, observe, and remember these things.

Clouds: In almost every landscape there is a sky — usually one with clouds in it. These may be huge, threatening thunderheads — light, fleecy forms that drift slowly on — or many smaller high clouds that create a texture over large areas. Carefully selected, any one of these or other cloud forms may add conviction to the scene and help the composition.



Water: Like clouds, water may vary greatly in appearance. It may be flat and smooth on a calm day, choppy with whitecaps when there is a brisk wind blowing, or a storm-swept surface where waves rise to mountainous heights.

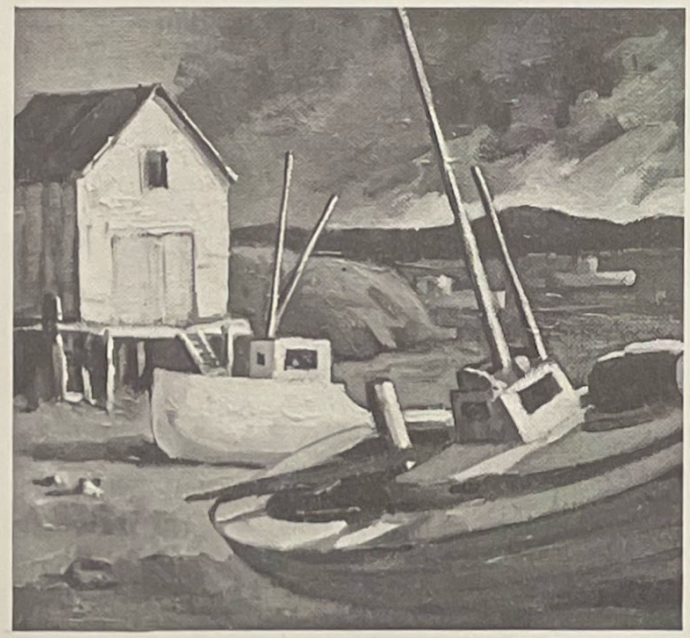
The weather in your landscape

What do different kinds of weather look like? In order to portray the warmth of sunshine, the ghostly feeling of fog, the drama of an impending storm, or the quiet mood of dusk you must know what each of these is really like in visual terms.

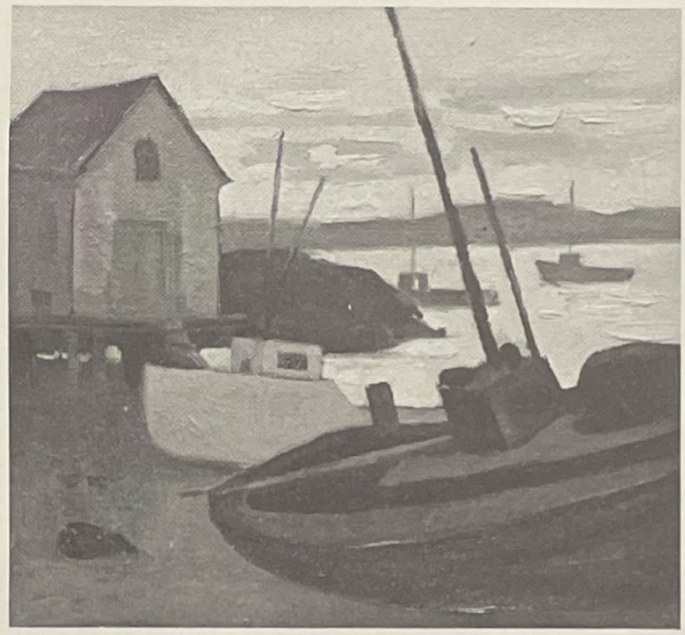
Your own firsthand observation counts most in learning to paint weather. You don't have to travel far to observe it – it's all around you. Study the weather as if you were ready to paint it – note the shapes, values, and edges of objects and how different they appear under different conditions. The examples below point out some of these changing effects. Compare these examples carefully, and learn all you can from them. Weather is important – there will be some in every landscape you paint.

In a sunny scene the planes which face the overhead sun are bright and sharp. The shadows are definite but are filled with light thrown back into them from the sunlit surfaces. The whole scene is high in key.

When fog envelops the landscape, soft, diffused edges predominate. The tones of all but the nearest objects are close together in a very high key. In painting this effect of fog it is important to put in no more than you see.



A sudden storm that moves in during a sunny day has its own dramatic pattern. The sunstruck objects stand out in sharp contrast to the dark sky and the distant shore and water that are under the shadow of the clouds.



At twilight the values of objects both near and far begin to merge, and the sharp contrasts of daylight are gone. The forms tend to appear flatter in this light and to silhouette against sky and water.

Time of day

Each day you have an opportunity to see the characteristic appearance of morning, noon, and night. The overhead sun of noon casts short shadows and strong light on planes that face the sky. Early morning or late afternoon shadows are long, with the strongest lights on the vertical planes that face the low sun, while the roof planes are relatively darker than at noon. Against the sky of early evening, the forms merge into a flat silhouette.

Noon

Early morning or late afternoon

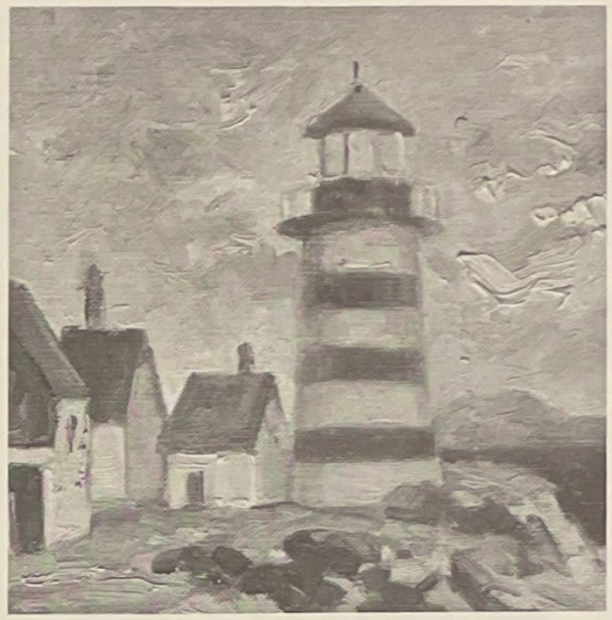
Dusk

Atmosphere is a matter of values and edges

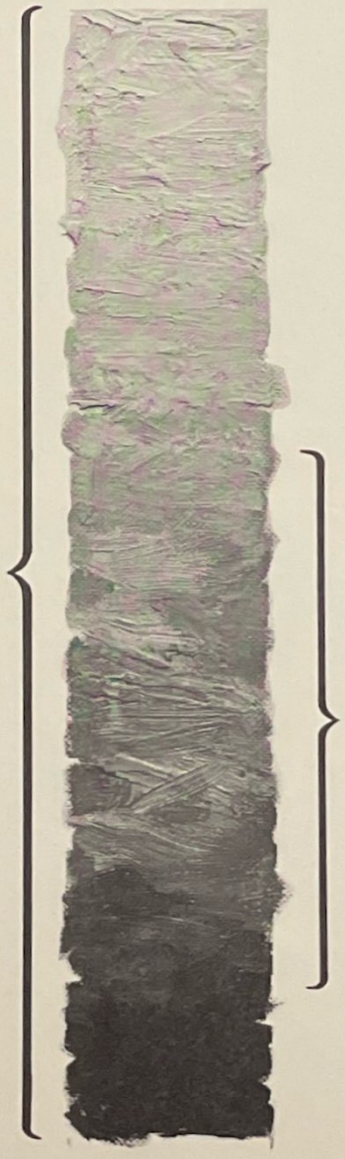
When you draw or paint the effects of atmosphere, your control of values and edges is all-important. You can create any weather effect you wish when you combine this control with sensitive observation.

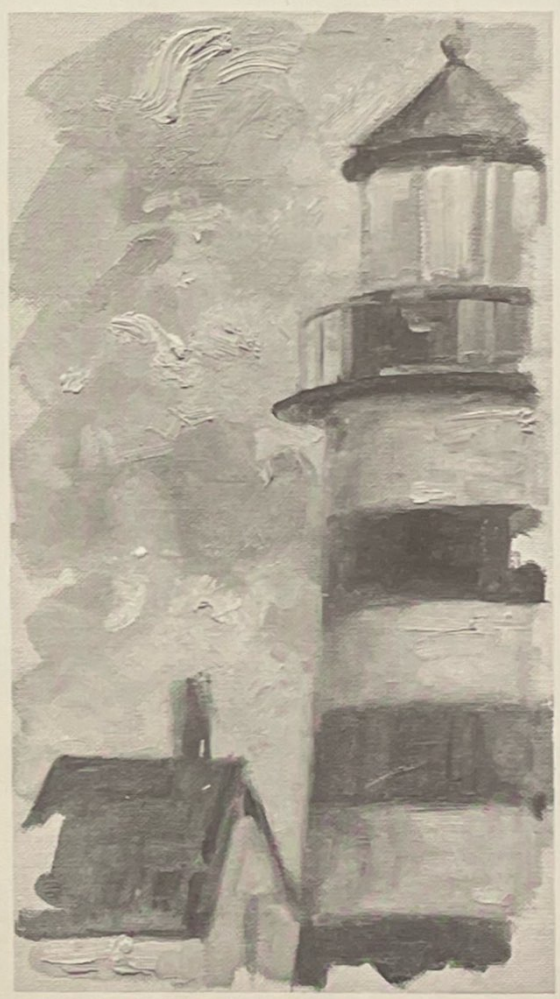
In the two pictures below you see the same scene under two different weather conditions — in strong sunlight and on a gray day. A section of each of these pictures is shown enlarged at the bottom of the page. In the sunlit scene, there is a strong sense of form, created by the direct light source. Notice the crisp, clear edges, particularly on the planes which face toward the light. In painting a weather effect like this, keep the over-all picture high in key. Even the shadows are going to be affected by the bright sunlight.

The picture of the landscape on a gray day is in sharp contrast. Here the darker tones of sky and buildings are close in value. Chiefly because of these close values the over-all effect of the edges is soft and diffused, and the forms seem flat compared to their more three-dimensional appearance in the sunlit scene. Always keep your eyes open for basic facts like these — for the way values and edges change under different conditions. It will help you to make the weather in your landscapes believable and effective.



This detail of the sunlit scene shows the hard edges between tones such as the bands on the lighthouse or the roofs and sky. Almost the whole range of values from white to black is used to create the strong contrasts between light and shadow planes.





Here is the same detail from the scene as it appears on a dark, cloudy day. The values of buildings and sky are close together because there is no direct strong light to establish contrasts. The edges, too, are softer than those we see in the sunlit version.

Finding the key to interest

(Robert Fawcett)

The pictures on these two pages were made to show you that a landscape which looks incredibly dull may actually contain certain key elements that can form the basis of a good picture.

Although the artist can often avoid using an uninteresting landscape, at times he is forced to illustrate a situation which takes place against one – for example, the flat concrete wall of a warehouse, a strip of sand and ocean, or a maze of brush or trees. The possibilities of a dramatic figure situation or action may be too good to pass by, although the background seemingly promises to contribute little.

I have found that there is no such thing as a setting without the possibilities of interest. It does not matter how dull it seems – the material is there if one has the desire to see it.

These four pictures demonstrate the point. Sometimes the answer is to exaggerate forms, lines, patterns, or textures. Sometimes it is to simplify them. At other times change of size and position contributes most. But in every case it means making what is there work rather than introducing new items or switching to a new scene.

Try all of these approaches. Design and organize, play one pattern against another. Enough of this practice will bring you to the eventual goal – complete control of your picture.

At first glance this photo seems hopeless — a confused maze of indistinct shapes. Looking closely, however, we can make out an interesting variety of forms: at the left, the pine with its spreading branches, the graceful arching group of thin trees next to it, the white birches in the middle, the strong pattern of shapes at the right, and the pattern of shadows on the snow.

In the picture at the right I have picked these elements out of the confusion and played them against each other to form strong, interesting contrasts. The treatment is simple and diagrammatic to make the point. In a more finished picture, I would make very sure that the details did not destroy these elements. Note the change in the proportions of the picture — now the essentially vertical trees no longer form a narrow horizontal band, and the empty area of snow takes up less of the picture space.

Though this photo is more interesting than the last, the composition is still somewhat haphazard. We must develop the underlying structure — emphasize the shapes, rhythms, and textures — if we are to paint a picture and not copy a photograph.

Before going to work, I asked myself some questions: Can I see distinct shapes in the light and shadow areas on the trees? Are some things falling out of the picture (here, for instance, the telephone pole)? Are some areas of foliage solid, others delicately filigreed? What is the basic pattern of lines created by the limbs? I asked other questions, too.

At the right you see my answers. The picture has been made vertical to suit the upright tree forms. The streaks of light curving on the bank have been modified into a clear, exciting pattern. Branches and foliage are organized into designed areas of texture. Everything — shapes, textures, positions, sizes — has been made more definite.

Another photo that is less than exciting — how can we base a picture on it? First we shear away some of the waste foreground and blank sky. The trees are interesting, so we enlarge them. In those at the left the curved shapes of the foliage have a certain gracefulness — we make more of this, and play the rhythmic pattern of curves against the straight, rigid shoreline and the massive tree forms at the right. Some clouds are added to give the sky character, and we reduce the trees, grass, water, and reflections to their basic shapes by omitting confusing details. With nothing fuzzy any more, a picture begins to emerge.

This snapshot has all the elements we need for a good picture, but they cry out for rearranging. Let's organize the piles better — now they frame the boat, our center of interest. To make it really stand out, we cut down on the water, enlarge the sky, and raise the sail. Texture, added throughout, gives life and movement. In the foreground the beam shoots disturbingly out of the bottom — but, straightened, it echoes the rhythm of the shoreline.

Selecting and organizing the view

On the preceding pages Robert Fawcett demonstrated how you could redesign nature's landscape without making radical changes – working almost wholly with the scene before you. Here we show some additional points to keep in mind when you compose a landscape.

Almost always, when you work from nature, you are faced with the problem of selecting from an almost infinite number of landscape elements that stretch from one end of the horizon to the other. It is a mistake to assume that you are forced to select a limited view from this vista – that you must focus only on an area similar in shape to the limits of your picture space. Actually, you have complete freedom to move trees, buildings, hills, anything – to the left or right as well as back or forth.

For example, most of the elements you want might already be grouped together quite interestingly but there might also be, far off to one side or way back in the distance, just the building or tree you need for your composition. If so, don't hesitate to move this form right to the spot where it will do the most good. Remember, the people who see your picture do not care how you arrived at it – they simply want it to be interesting.

The photo above represents the wide expanse you see when you look at a landscape. In composing this scene into a picture, you extract from the whole vista the most interesting elements and group them pleasingly together, as in the accompanying sketch.

There is no need to show the landscape elements the same size you find them in nature. Don't hesitate to enlarge a tree or building to make it appear closer, or reduce the size of other elements to make them seem to recede. Note that, in proceeding from photo to sketch, the artist has moved the barn across the road to "stop" the strong movement of the lines of the road and the mass of trees and brush which converge toward the left.

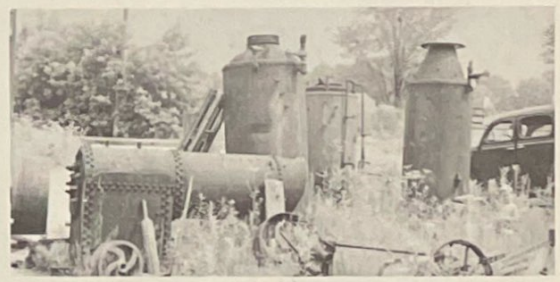
Your subject is all around you

Nature simply won't deliver landscapes to you ready to be painted. You'll have to go out and find the individual parts and then make them fit together. Sometimes you will see right in front of you many of the landscape elements you need. Where will you find the rest? They may very well be in back of you — or across the road, around the corner, or off in the distance. Sometimes you may discover them in your memory — they may be objects you saw long ago or photographed, filing the photos away just for such an occasion as this.

The magazine cover painting at the right illustrates our point. It shows a man tending a garden in a junkyard, and the picture is based on a series of photographs the artist took at an old scrap iron dump and elsewhere. What the artist did not find in one view he found in another — and the composite is much more effective than a single photographed background would have been. By looking carefully around, he was able to find all the elements he needed to make an interesting and unusual composition.

© The Curtis Publishing Co.

This photo shows the main part of the dump, with the crane used for moving scrap iron and the little shack of the man in charge. The artist used these, some of the larger forms in the dump, and the heap of scrap in the foreground. A number of these objects were shown pretty much as they appear here, others were moved to improve the composition.



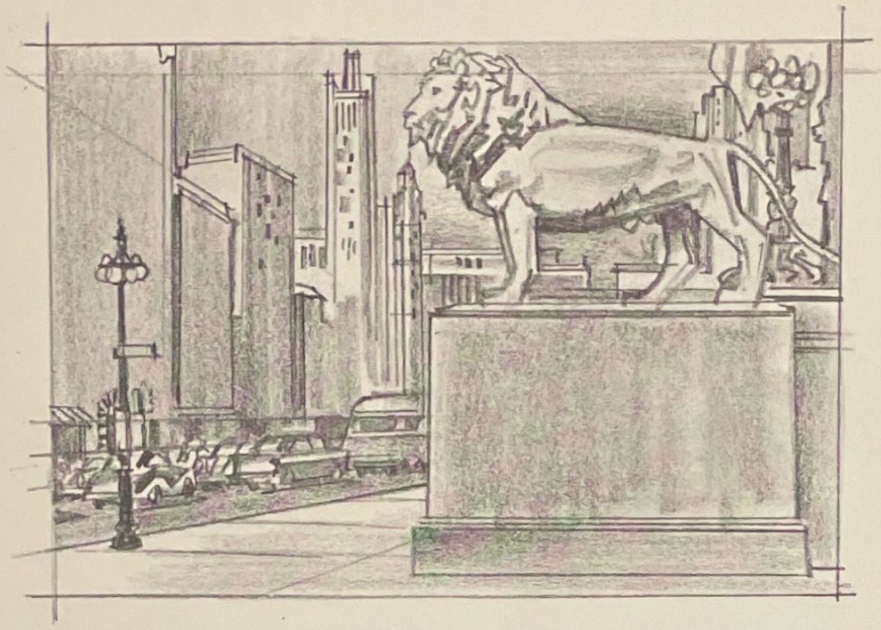
In the artist's files he found these photos to supply his vertical and horizontal lines. He had taken them some years before because he felt he would have use for them someday. The upright forms were used quite literally and the horizontal forms of the two photographs were combined to get the smokestack. The man's figure came from still another photo.

This is the garden — not much to work from, but it was enough to supply the details of the fence and sign, which were the important features. Creating the garden was only a matter of suggesting some freshly planted earth with the little rows of seedlings appearing, and putting in the seed packets at the end of the rows.

This photo of Pittsburgh's skyline was taken at another place. The artist did not try to make his painting look like Pittsburgh but substituted other buildings for some in the photograph. He wanted simply to get the effect of a large city and an industrial atmosphere as a foil for the tiny garden.

How common is a common object?

Stevan Dohanos made these pictures to show that even the homely fireplug has individuality and interest – a character of its own. Before starting to work, Dohanos did some research on fireplugs, as he does on every subject he paints. He learned about their construction, why they are made as they are, and that different towns have fireplugs with different shapes and colors. His intention was not to become an expert on the subject, but simply to learn as much about it as he could so that his picture would reflect this knowledge and interest to anyone who saw it.



Setting the locale

Here we show you some excellent examples of how familiar objects and landmarks can be used to set the scene and make effective illustrations.

Robert Fawcett's assignment was to show interviews taking place in several major American cities. The figures were to dominate, but the locale had to be recognizable.

Chicago was one city. Fawcett selected a view which would show two well-known landmarks: the lions on the steps of the Art Institute and, down Michigan Avenue, the tower of the Wrigley Building. He also included a street lamp — not any street lamp, but a Chicago street lamp. At the left is the setting without the figures.

Notice that the figures take up a great deal of the picture space. Fawcett designed them as an over-all shape that would dominate the picture.

Behind his figures he carefully arranged characteristic parts of the identifying landmarks. These things would not look exactly the same in a photograph. Adjustments in size and position were made to fit them in behind the figures. The head of the lion and the tower of the building (the parts that identify) are placed to avoid confusion with the figures and the rest of the background.

Courtesy Hiram Walker, Inc.

In this illustration the interview is taking place in Boston. Fawcett has composed his background elements with the same purposeful care that went into the picture above. At the right we can see a brick wall, which is typical of New England. In the background there is a famous landmark, the statue of Paul Revere. Notice that the statue, although in a prominent position, does not distract from the figures but actually helps the composition. Its arm points at the interviewer, who points to the other man, establishing an interesting circular rhythm.

You learn to draw by drawing

A case history

Norman Rockwell

Sometimes a picture really stumps me and I must make numerous sketches before arriving at what I consider is the correct solution. Such was the case in this picture of an early morning scene at a motel, showing a family about to depart and asking directions of the manager. I do not recommend making this many sketches for each picture, but it is better to sweat it out, when necessary, and make additional sketches than it is to proceed with the first idea you have, then end up with a mediocre picture, after hours and hours of painting.

1 This was a small sketch intended to establish the tonal relationship. I saw immediately that the picture did not possess a strong center of interest. The two men looking at the map did not dominate the composition sufficiently.

2 Here I moved the two men to the foreground and added other elements, such as the croquet mallets, to indicate the atmosphere of a tourist camp. But I did not like the relationship of values. The light gables of the house and the woman packing the car competed too strongly with the key figure of the man pointing to the map.

3 Now the two men dominate the situation because of a better tonal relationship. But there still seems to be too much competition from the people and objects in the background because of a similarity in size. Also this might be a night scene, whereas I am trying to depict an early-morning departure.

4 At last I am getting somewhere. The tourist camp atmosphere is well established but it is made definitely secondary to the two men studying the map. I discarded this sketch, however, because the background seemed too important. I made the mistake of placing the camp in the western mountains. This might appeal to tourists who happened to have traveled in the West, but would not be very meaningful to those who had not.

5 Here I have tried to simplify the picture further, but I still am having trouble with that background. I feel the need of trees or some other shapes, but they would compete with the main idea and force me to be too specific about the location. The point here is that exact location is necessary for a story illustration, but this picture was intended for a magazine cover. I wanted the setting to be as general as possible, so it would appeal to people in every part of the country.

6 It was a tough fight, but I won! Now there is no unnecessary competition from the background. This camp could be located anywhere, and any tourist can enjoy this picture and project himself into it whether he has traveled in the mountains or not. The key of the picture better indicates early morning and people getting off to an early start. In the early versions it seemed to be a night scene I was depicting rather than a morning one. This picture has a further advantage. The figure in the foreground means more because of the extended arm.

A variety of approaches

Each artist views and interprets a landscape in his own personal way. For one, the realistic quality of the scene may have the strongest appeal. For another, the greatest interest and satisfaction may come from reducing the scene to a simple statement of its essentials — to a bold pattern or a delicate design. Still another artist might find great pleasure in the technique itself — in an original and imaginative way of using his materials to interpret the scene.

As with all art, there is no one approach, no rule that says: "It must be done like this." There is only the way that seems best and most expressive for your own creative personality.

© Street & Smith Publications, Inc.; reprinted from Charm

Ben Shahn: Shahn reduces things to their essentials. His setting, dominated by the large dark shape of the factory building, has a stark, strong pattern. Contrast this story illustration with Peter Helck's warm, realistic picture at the left.

Courtesy Caterpillar Tractor Co.

Peter Helck: Peter Helck's panorama of a rich, rolling countryside reflects his typical approach to nature — he sees her on a grand scale. His realistic interpretation puts the viewer in the figure's place, standing at the side of the road, gazing over miles of hill and valley, surrounded by the warmth of a summer's day.

Courtesy Coca-Cola Co.

Jack Potter: In Jack Potter's picture of an outdoor café in Paris the dominant effect is decorative. The impressionistic pattern of brush marks gives the picture a bright, lively over-all texture. The decorative quality is strengthened by the slender trees, which suggest the panels in a folding screen.

Every interior has its own character and personality. Be alert to the unique qualities of each setting and select those which will support and strengthen your picture idea.

Photos courtesy Interiors Magazine
and Ewing Galloway

Interiors

Think of interiors just as you do of landscapes – as locale. Many of the same considerations apply. An interior must be convincing and characteristic – if not of a region, then of a certain period and economic level. By its furnishings, its lighting, its order or disorder, it can create a mood that will add greatly to the meaning of the picture. Carefully planned, the interior can increase the interest and effectiveness of the composition.

This, then, is the same approach we took toward landscape – we've just moved indoors.

Since even more illustrations have an interior than an exterior or landscape setting, it's time well spent to study this part of the lesson just as attentively as the first part and acquire a good understanding of how to use interiors to best advantage.

Every room has a character

In planning an interior, the first thing to consider is the character of the room. It is up to you to determine what setting best supports and explains the figure action. Often, of course, the setting is described in some detail or dictated for you if it's a story illustration. But even here you have some choice. You should put in or play up only those things which help, and omit confusing or misleading props.

An interior should reflect the people who live in it, their taste and social standing. For example, the smartness of a young advertising man and his wife could be reflected in a tastefully but modestly furnished modern room. This modest quality might give way to obviously expensive furnishings if we were showing the home of one of the advertising agency's executives.

When you plan an interior, remember that regional differences may also enter in. A typical living room in the northern part of the country might have a well-used fireplace, heavy rugs and drapes, heavily upholstered furniture, and relatively smaller windows. By contrast, such a room in Florida or California might be identified by lighter, thinner furniture forms, large walls of glass and a tile floor that continues past sliding glass panels to include an exterior garden as part of the room. It is well worth keeping posted on regional trends in interiors.

Since you must also be prepared to illustrate stories which have taken place at various times in history, you should know where to obtain information about the interiors of other eras – libraries, museums and publications that will prove most helpful. Here, research involves more than merely consulting books and photographs. Out of this material you must select that which is typical. This means reading up on the era or talking to people familiar with it.

Constructing your interiors

In earlier lessons you saw that whatever you drew – people, objects or buildings – construction was a key point to keep in mind. This is a logical spot for a reminder that your interiors should be constructed with special care. They don't need to have the accuracy of architectural drawings, but you should apply what you have learned about perspective. The floor must appear level, the walls straight, the figures and furniture in proportion. This applies, incidentally, even if you use the loosest and freest kind of technique or handling in making your pictures. If you know the sizes, relative proportions and actual positions of the things in the room – if you have carefully thought out the room and everything in it – you can then take liberties and feel confident that your knowledge will put the picture over.

Viewpoint and mood

Every interior has to be viewed from some point. Happily for the artist he can visualize the scene from every position and then choose the one that seems to fit the situation best. The room – as well as the figures in it – can be made to appear more important or dramatic, more exciting or matter-of-fact by the viewpoint you select.

Many varieties of mood can be expressed very clearly through the setting – not only by the viewpoint but also by the choice of objects, the order or lack of order among them, and the type of lighting under which you see them. You will use these things in one way to evoke the brightly colorful, carefree mood of a room housing a gay party – and in quite another way to suggest an interior in which a murderer lurks.

Selecting and composing

As with your landscapes, you are never forced to put into an interior any more than you need to tell your story. For example, you may have a photo showing an entire room, and it may seem both complicated and distracting as it stands. From this scene you should select just a few elements which are characteristic of the room. You may wish to rearrange these few objects into an interesting vignette rather than show a detailed view of a part of the scene. Such selection and rearrangement is often a necessity when you must make your illustration to fit special design or space requirements.

Compositionally, always be aware of what the patterns or textures of various parts of your interior (drapes, upholstery, rugs, bookshelves, etc.) are doing to your main figures. Almost always some of these textures and patterns must be subdued to keep them from competing with the figures or sometimes camouflaging them. For example, a woman in a dress with a floral pattern would be lost against a drape of similar design. Any setting can be made to work, but you must be ready to adjust values, sizes, and positions until confusion has been changed to clarity.

Often, an interior proves highly interesting in itself – it may be filled with many fascinating objects that cry out for a featured role in your picture. Look over such settings very carefully and make sure that they don't become so attractive that they compete with your main subject or idea. Remember that you are not an interior decorator – don't let an intriguing assemblage of props lure you out of your real role as an illustrator with an idea to get across. On the other hand, don't hesitate to try out the possibilities that unusual furnishings can offer – they can be real "stoppers" if they are appropriate.

As a serious artist, never think of the interior in your picture as a secondary area that you fill with "a couple of pieces of furniture and a wall." The interior offers you a challenging opportunity to make your illustration more exciting, more convincing. Plan the setting and draw it with the same interest, thought and imagination with which you handle your figures.

The interior — and the people who live in it

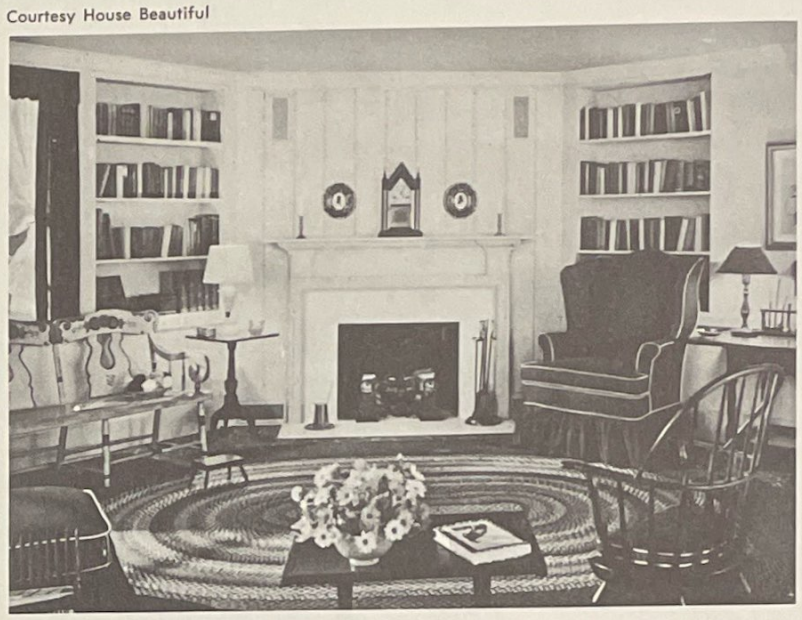
Every interior reflects the taste and personality of its inhabitants or their station in life. A well-to-do, smart young couple will live in one kind of place – an elderly farmer and his wife in quite another. One of the best ways to select an interior for your illustration is to visualize the people you might find living in it.

Before you settle on an interior, ask yourself: Does this kind of background make my characters seem more at home? Does it make their actions and the situation more convincing? The more clearly you see your characters the easier it will be to choose an appropriate interior for them.

Courtesy Baker Furniture Co.

This smartly furnished corner of a modern living room would be fine as a setting for a bright young couple of good taste and some economic means.

Courtesy House Beautiful



This room, on the other hand, suggests older, more conservative tastes. Perhaps the parents or grandparents of the young modern couple make their home here.

Courtesy Ewing Galloway

This country kitchen, with its low ceiling, built-in stove, and rustic atmosphere, is typical of a very old English cottage.

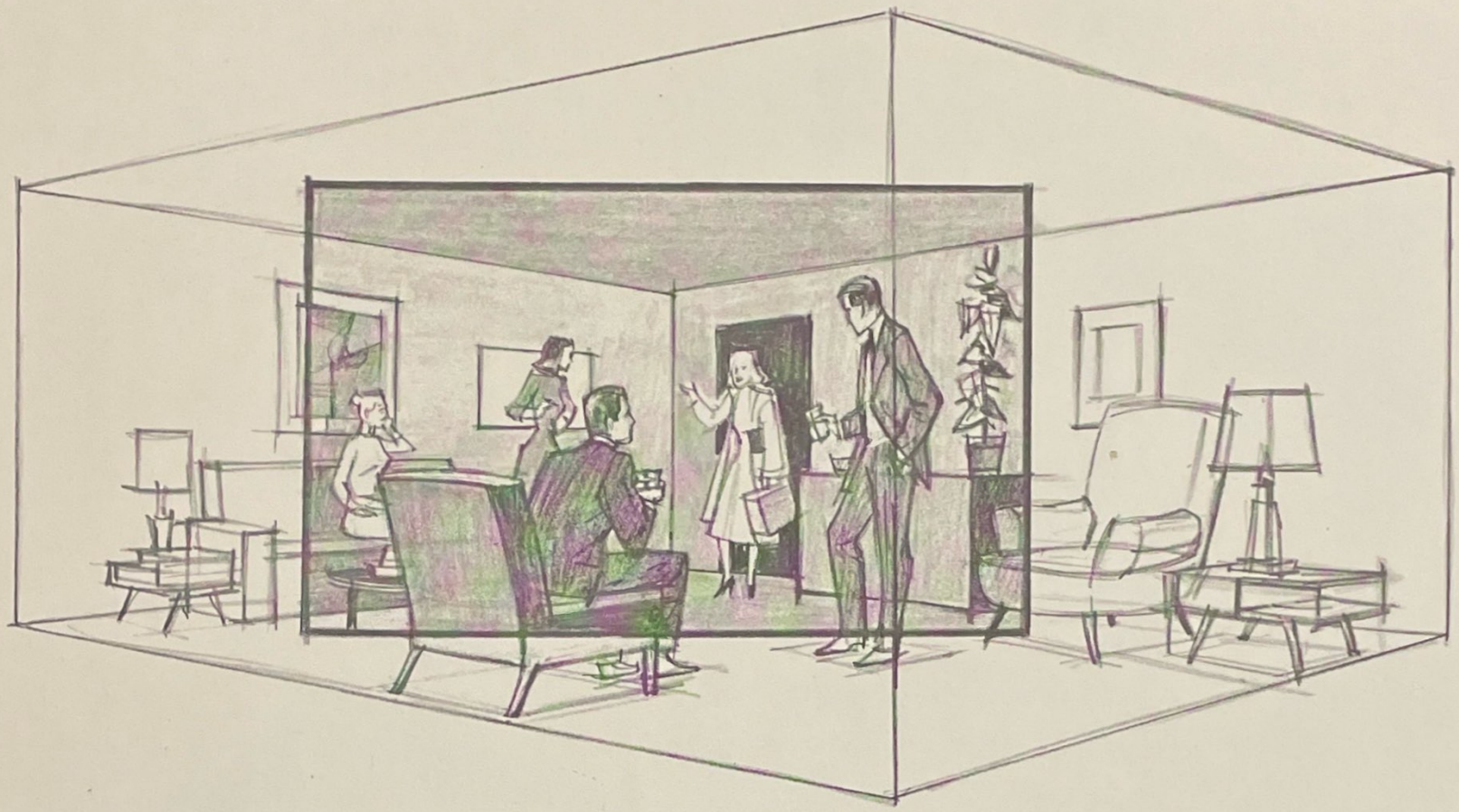
Reproduced from Look at America, published by Houghton Mifflin Co.

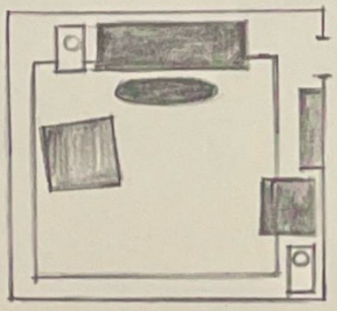
Against the backdrop of this elegant interior, southern belles in hoop skirts and well-to-do planters in tight-fitting frock coats held gay parties in days before the Civil War.

Constructing the scene

In planning and drawing your interiors, don't overlook the one thing that, more than anything else, will give them conviction. This is the use of proper construction. Your figures and furniture must really appear to rest on the floor — doors must seem large enough to walk through. A normal-sized living room must not look big enough to hold a convention.

The best way to construct a room is to draw it through. Sketch the entire room in perspective and show everything in it, even though just a corner of the room will appear in your finished picture. This way, you can be sure that the parts of the floor or wall, the furnishings, and figures will all fit together — be in proper scale to each other.



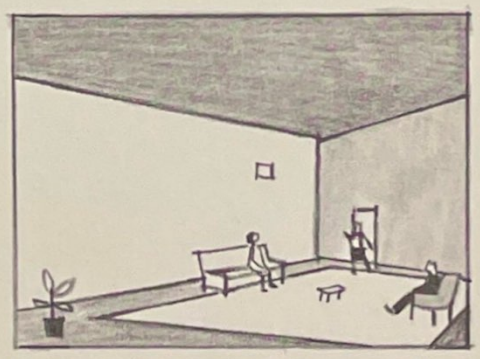


Consider the floor plan

You'll find it helpful, before you begin your drawing, to have a clear picture in your mind of the floor plan. Your floor plan need not be a painstakingly detailed sketch — it need not even be set down on paper. But you should think it through far enough to be sure that the things in your picture are in correct scale and position and there is enough room on the floor for the figures and furniture.

Here's what can happen when you don't establish a floor plan. The girl does not seem to be standing on the same plane as the other figures in the sketch.

Check the proportions of everything in the room as you sketch it in. Otherwise the doors may be too small or the furniture too large in relation to the figures — and that wouldn't make sense.



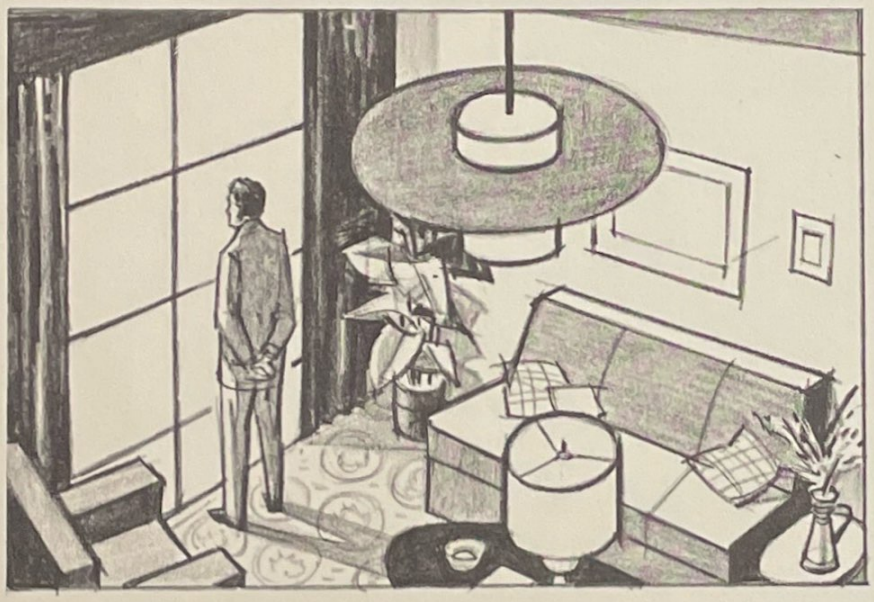
Don't lose sight of the scale of the room. A living room shouldn't look like a convention hall. It should be in proportion to the size of the figures and the objects in it.

Consider the view

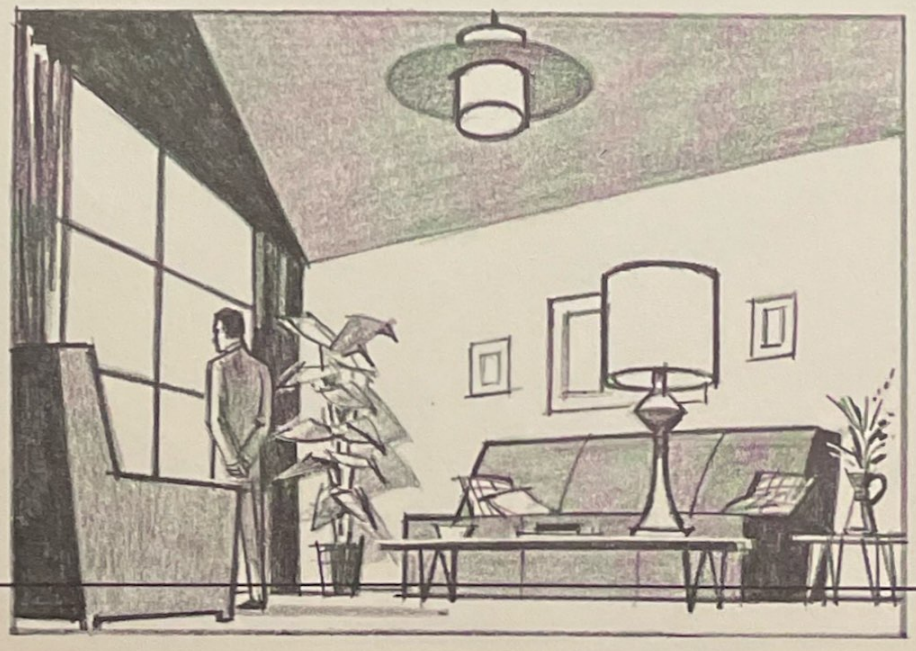
Whenever you plan a picture, remember that you have a choice of viewpoints from which to show it. Too often, artists form a habit of treating each scene, regardless of its subject or mood, from the same normal eye-level view. Probably most of your pictures should be done from this viewpoint, but there are other occasions when your basic idea can be made stronger and clearer and more dramatic by drawing the scene as though you were looking up or down at it.

There should always be a logical reason for an unusual viewpoint – if there isn't, it can confuse the scene you are trying to show. Don't be tricky – do be as selective in your choice of view as the artists who painted the pictures on the facing page.

Normal eye level:
Viewing the scene as though you were standing or sitting directly before it.



High eye level:
Looking down on the scene.



Low eye level:
Looking up at the scene.

Robert Fawcett © The Curtis Publishing Co.

Robert Fawcett, © The Curtis Publishing Co.

Al Parker Courtesy Cosmopolitan

Normal eye level: Each artist used a close-to-normal eye level in these pictures. In the disordered room we can most quickly see that things are not straight and in place because the view itself is straight and level. In the second picture the main problem was to show the old man's subtle gesture. The normal eye level makes this gesture clearest — seen from above or below, it might well be lost. In the third illustration the figure and props are treated as flat silhouettes. The shapes are seen from a clear, normal viewpoint for quick, easy recognition. These shapes would be confusing if they were drawn from a view which foreshortened them.

Austin Briggs © The Curtis Publishing Co.

Norman Rockwell © The Curtis Publishing Co.

Norman Rockwell © The Curtis Publishing Co.

High eye level: These pictures use a high eye level to good advantage. The woman on the floor is viewed from above to emphasize that she has fallen — and the tilt of the picture adds a note of drama. The two cleaning women are logically seen as though from a box — a view that reveals them, the tools of their trade, and the emptiness of the theater very clearly. The bridge game scene is the ultimate in the useful high eye level — we can see the players' card hands and speculate on the next card to be played.

Ben Stahl © The Curtis Publishing Co.

Austin Briggs © The Curtis Publishing Co.

Robert Fawcett © The Curtis Publishing Co.

Low eye level: For these pictures a low eye level has much in its favor. In the Ben Stahl illustration it gives the woman and her companions in evening dress even more dignity and aloofness. Briggs views his two seamen from below to make the action seem more dramatic and the man with the gun more threatening; the interior is tilted to suggest the ship is in a rough sea. In the prize-fight scene the low view places us at ringside and adds weight and power to the fighters.

Lighting the interior

There is no weather in an interior – but a gray day or a sunny one will influence the lighting. So will the time of day. When you plan an interior, always establish the approximate time and the type of lighting. Lighting, carefully controlled, will strengthen the conviction of your picture and emphasize the mood.

Study the illustrations below. They point out some important things you should be aware of in rendering the effects of light and dark. Make many studies like these in your own home. They will give you the experience you need to handle all kinds of lighting and use it to make your pictures more interesting.

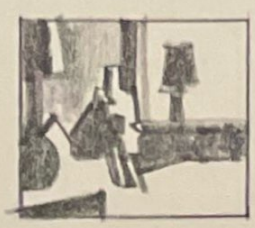
Sunlight through a window: This lighting has a strong directional quality. The planes of the figure and the furnishings facing the window are struck by light; there are definite shadows on the opposite side of the forms.

Night: Now, with the interior illuminated, it is light inside and dark outside. The lamp focuses its light sharply in a small area, but this light fades rapidly the further it travels from the source, leaving most of the room only weakly and indirectly lighted.

Late afternoon: This effect is similar indoors and out. The interior tones merge, and the woman, furnishings, floor, and wall tend to form one large, dark shape against the light of the window. Although local value differences become slight, there is still enough light to see the forms and some detail within them.

Decorative: This is not so much a kind of lighting as a method of working. There is no direct light source or pattern of light and shade here — things are in sharp, clear focus and we rely on carefully designed shapes to describe the forms. Bold patterns and value contrast are used to feature or subordinate objects.

Seek out the big effects. Reduce your lighting to its simplest terms to give the scene strength and impact.



Bright daylight

Night

Late afternoon

Decorative treatment

How much background to use

We have seen that an interior, like a landscape, serves chiefly as background in an illustration. It is a setting for figures or a product rather than a center of interest in itself. However, even as background, the setting will vary greatly in importance from picture to picture.

Sometimes a setting has an intrinsic interest. The interior of a museum or a cathedral, the den of a big-game hunter with its walls decorated with trophies of the chase, or any other setting full of unusual or impressive objects automatically commands attention. It deserves to be seen, and the professional artist usually allows it to be seen to good advantage. Notice, for example, how effectively Austin Briggs uses an interesting setting in the illustration below.

On the other hand, sometimes you will have to work with a dull interior. Your setting may be the lobby of an office building, with large blank walls, or a hospital corridor. Such a background has little to recommend it, and you will be wise to avoid spreading it across three-quarters of your picture space.

Another basic consideration is the importance of the setting to the situation illustrated. If the background is actively involved in the story or helps to explain the action of the figures or the purpose of the product, then it should be shown in some detail. Often, however, the emotional reaction of the characters will be more important, as in Al Parker's illustration below. When this is the case, you will usually want to hold the background to a minimum – give more of the picture space to the figures. But, even when you subordinate the setting, you should always make sure that the little you do show is characteristic and identifies the locale. If you show only part of an object, it should be a typical part, so the viewer can recognize it.

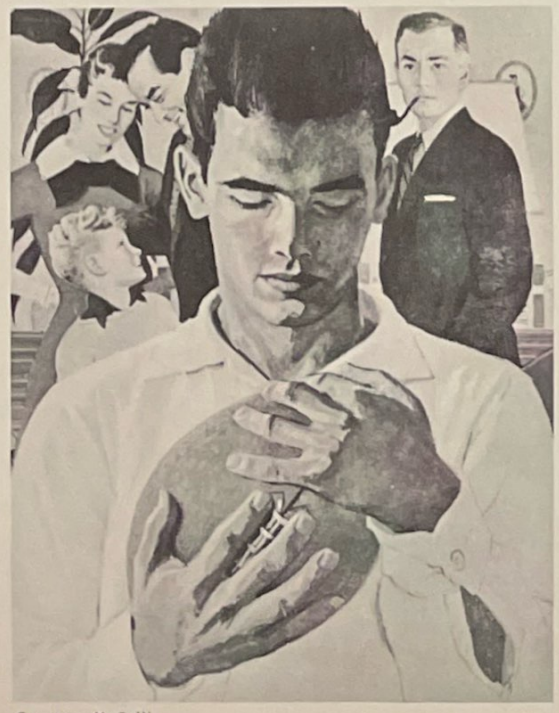
Background can serve as background – and as something more. When we go into a person's house, the interior often tells us a good deal about him. It may reveal that he is careless or neat, rich or poor, cultured or ignorant, a hobbyist, a collector of paintings, or a man who has visited the far corners of the earth. In a picture, the background can suggest the character and interests of the figure just the way the actual home does. By showing more or less of the interior, you can tell the viewer more or less about the figure in the picture.

Mood and contrast are other possibilities that can be exploited in an interior. A background in a high key gives a picture a feeling of liveliness and good cheer. Dark values in the setting create a dark mood or an atmosphere of mystery. Contrast – placing a character in a setting where he is out of place – can be used for many different effects. Two burly plumbers in a lady's frilly boudoir instantly suggest a comic situation. A grimy cowboy, booted and spurred, standing in an elegant living room, makes us very curious to know more. Mood can be established with a minimum of background, but you have to put in much more to use contrast to good advantage.

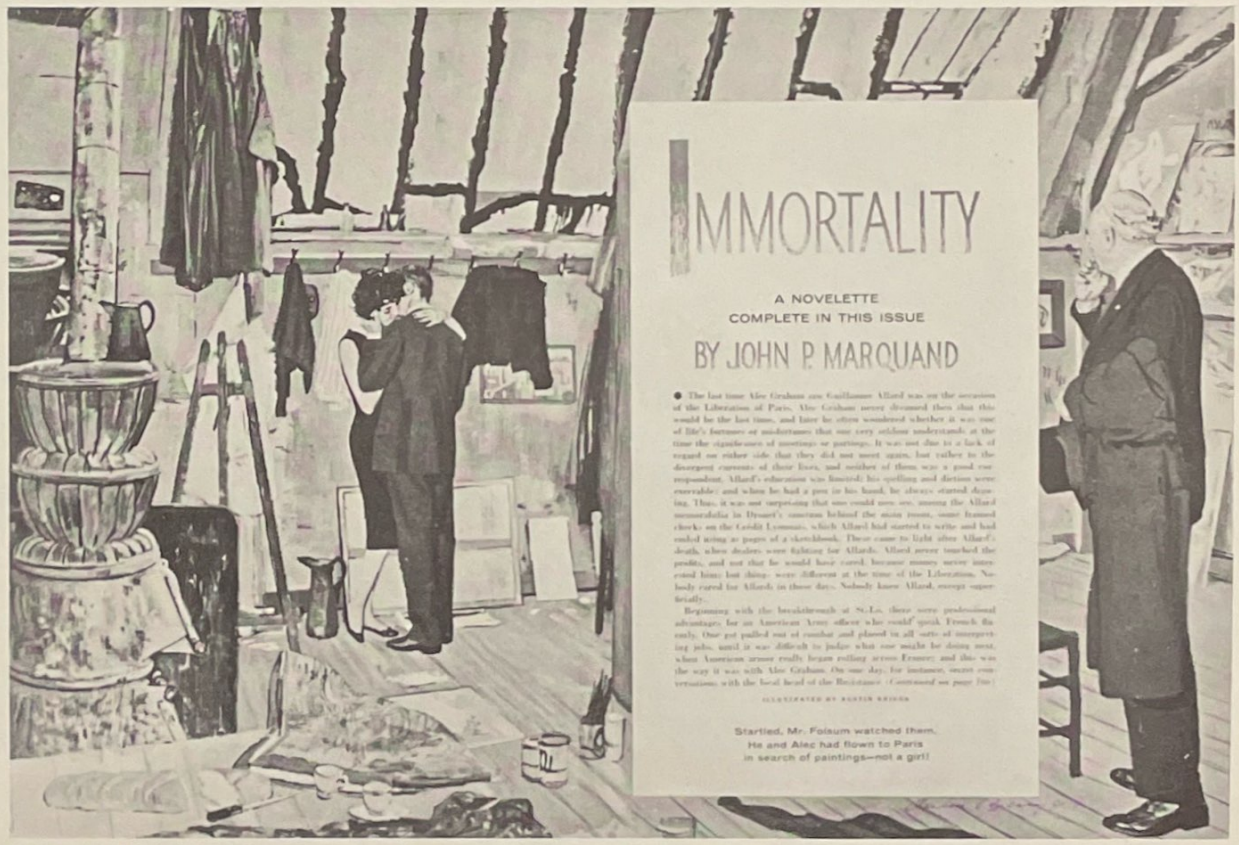
If you show a great deal of background, take care that it does not overwhelm your figures. Control the background forms and their values and textures so they do not become more important than the figure action or interfere with the clarity of the over-all picture. In every case, it is not just a background you are creating, but a complete picture.

Austin Briggs has made excellent use of an unusual interior *(right)* to create a striking illustration. The boy-and-girl embrace by itself would not be as interesting as it is here, set in a Paris studio with its skylight pattern, old stove, and other studio furnishings.

Al Parker's picture of the boy with the football contains just a suggestion of a living room, but it is enough to identify the kind of room. Any more background would be wrong – would divert attention from the all-important expression on the boy's face.



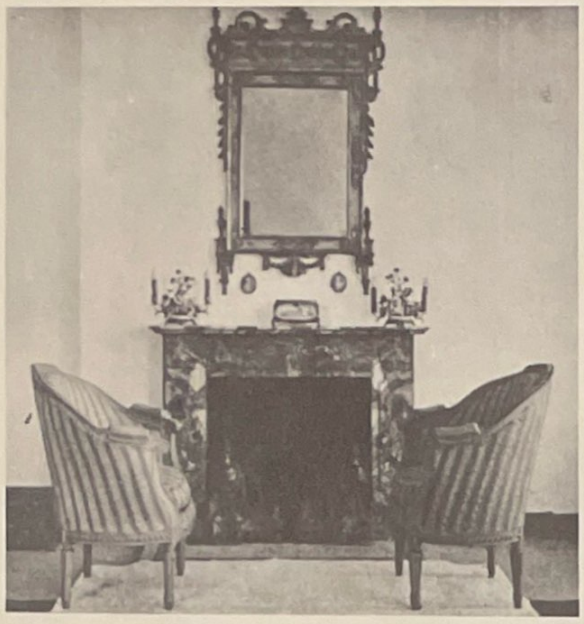
Courtesy McCall's


MMORTALITY
A NOVELETTE
COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE
BY JOHN P. MARQUAND
Startled, Mr. Folsum watched them.
He and Alec had flown to Paris
in search of paintings—not a girl!

Courtesy Good Housekeeping

See – Observe – Remember

Courtesy Interiors Magazine



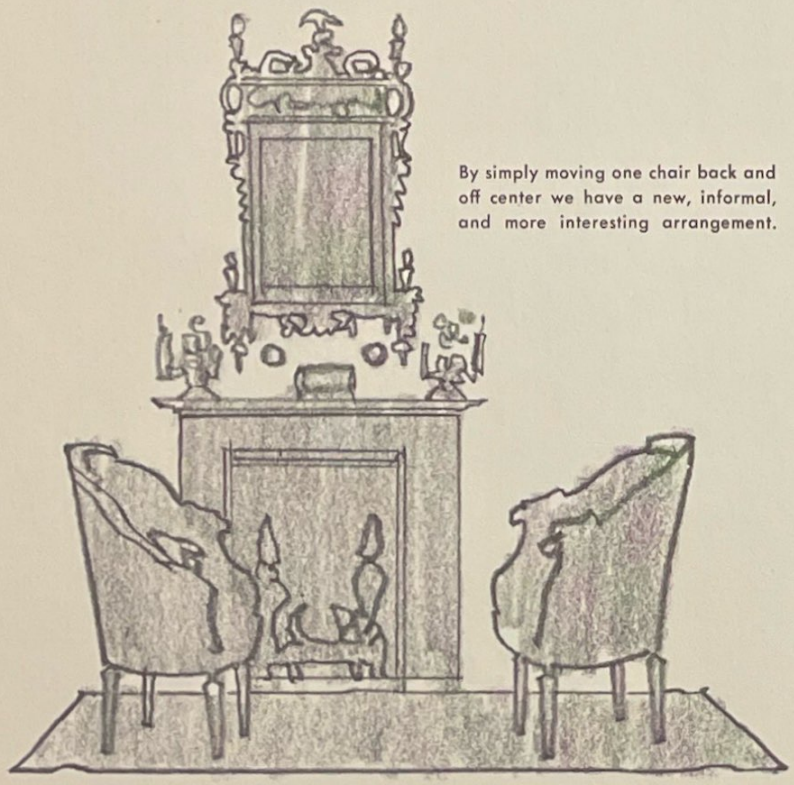
Let's use this formal, symmetrical arrangement as a point of departure for several different groupings.

You have a choice of views and arrangements

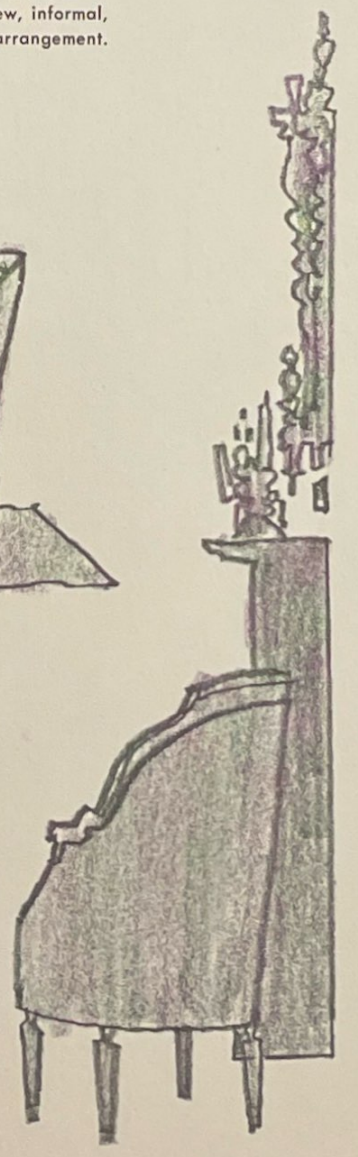
Whether you work directly from a real interior setting or a photo, never feel compelled to copy the photo or use the first viewpoint you see. You have much more freedom of viewpoint in a picture than in a real interior. For example, you can simply "knock out" a wall if the view from behind it is the best one.

Try out all the possibilities in rough sketches. Move around the picture interior just as you would in the real room, and learn what you can do with various viewpoints. Space requirements will often force you to adopt a viewpoint different from the one in a photo. The photo may be a horizontal rectangle, but your illustration may have to fit into a narrow vertical space.

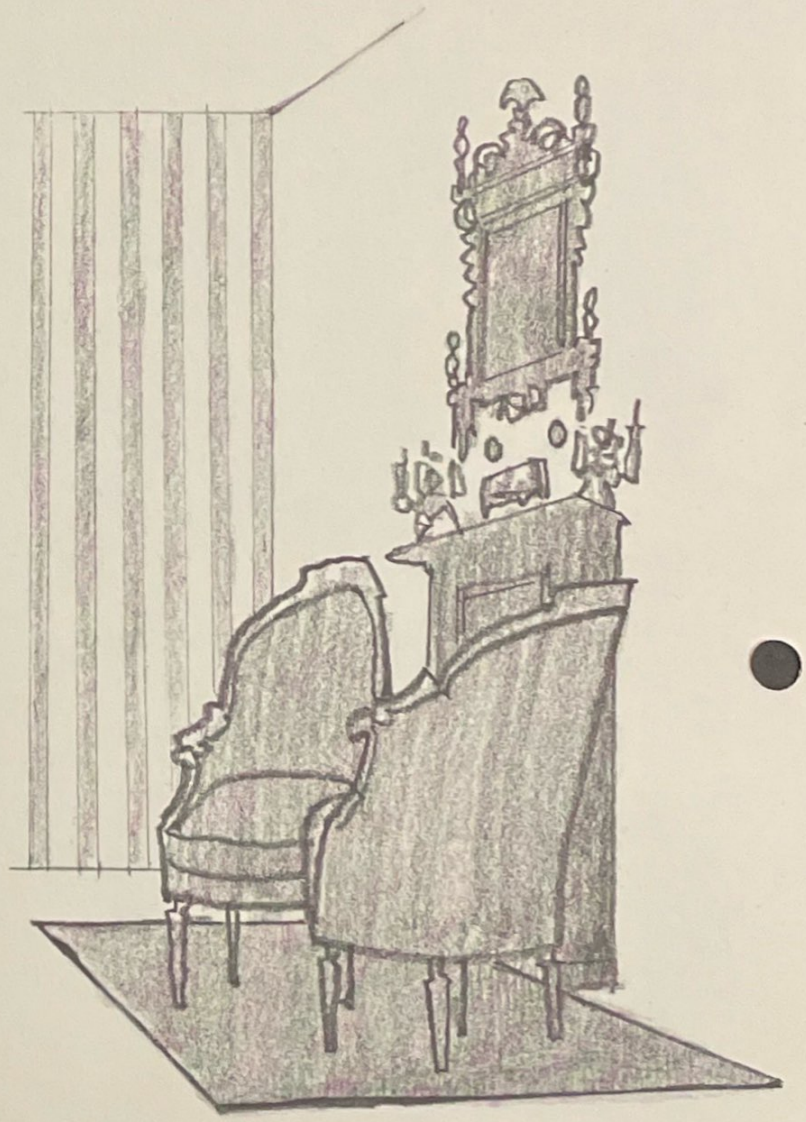
Be ready to rearrange the furniture, too, if it will make a more interesting scene. You are not tied to what you see in the actual interior – you have creative scope. You should also be aware that you can select the key elements from an interior and regroup them to form a well-designed vignette. The examples below show how this can be done.



By simply moving one chair back and off center we have a new, informal, and more interesting arrangement.



This arrangement with just one chair points up other possibilities. The narrow vertical shape is well adapted for use in a layout with the illustration along the right side of the page. Or the single chair might contain a seated figure looking up and carrying our eye toward a standing figure who would be the central character. This figure might stand free or perhaps lean on the mantel.



When we move off to the side, another grouping reveals itself. With a view like this, we must take care that the silhouettes of chairs and mantel are not run together or confused. A striped paper on the far wall helps balance the weight at the right. Whatever your source, always be ready to add or leave out.

You don't have to show the whole room

Always remember that the main purpose of your picture is to communicate an idea. The idea may be expressed in great detail or briefly and directly. As part of the picture idea, the interior, too, can show the setting in great detail or merely suggest it. The vignettes below demonstrate how an interior can be suggested with a minimum of detail.

In designs like these the artist must be especially careful to select just the right type of furnishings. A few pieces of furniture must identify the scene quickly and clearly.

In the Briggs picture below, a sofa, a clock, and parts of three chairs are all we see of the setting. The long shape of the sofa holds the composition together, and with the other pieces describes the scene. Nothing more is needed. The viewer's imagination fills in the rest of the room.

In the other picture, by Al Parker, most of the space is taken up by the furniture, although the girl is the obvious center of interest. The pleasant grouping of the curved love seat, table, and lamp are all we need to visualize the type of room in the story.

© The Curtis Publishing Co.

© The Curtis Publishing Co.

The interior helps to tell the story

"Fewer nights 'on the road' — flying makes it possible" is the theme of this continuity of four illustrations made by Robert Fawcett for an airline. They show that in one day a man can leave home, fly to a far-off city, transact his business, and get back in time to spend a full evening with his family. Notice the part the carefully planned interiors play in getting the story across.

1 This picture shows the family in their living room as the businessman leaves on his trip. This setting was selected because it says "home" and contrasts sharply with the business setting in the next picture.

2 Many things help to say "business visit in Washington" here. The window view shows the National Art Gallery and the Capitol dome. The furnishings suggest the office of an important official of the government.

Courtesy Douglas Aircraft Co.

3 Our man is flying home now. The simple streamlining, curved ceiling, viewless windows, stewardess, and woman passenger looking down all serve to identify the plane interior.

4 Here our man is back home, settled in the living room he left earlier. Fawcett's view of the room is shifted to include the fireplace, symbol of home, but we quickly recognize the room.

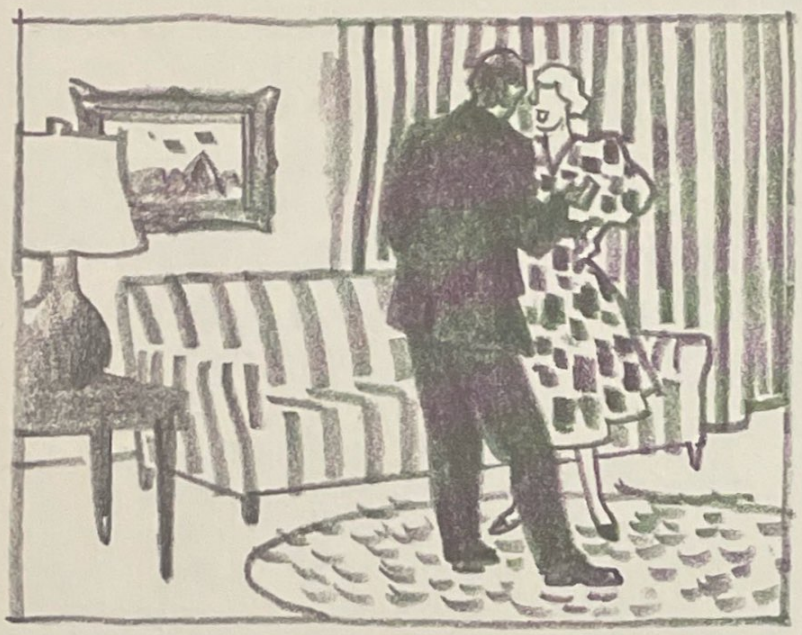
Controlling texture and pattern in the interior

Let's start with this interior arrangement as a setting for two figures.

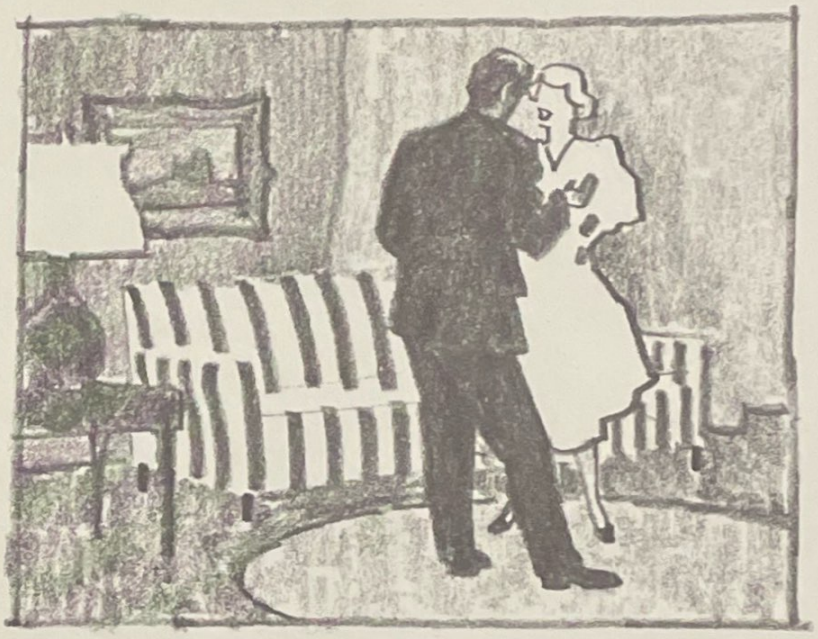
In most figure illustrations the interior is chiefly a setting which must be controlled and kept subordinate to the real center of interest – the figures. This means that you should always be aware of just how much the pattern and texture of chairs, rugs, sofas, drapes, wallpaper, etc., stand out in your picture, compared to the figures. Active patterns and textures must be adjusted to fit with each other as well as the figures.

Sometimes you will find that you have set one busy pattern against another, creating confusion or "busyness" in an area that should be quiet. There are many ways to handle this problem. Simply moving the strongly patterned objects apart will quiet them down. Overlapping part of a strong pattern with a plain fabric is another solution.

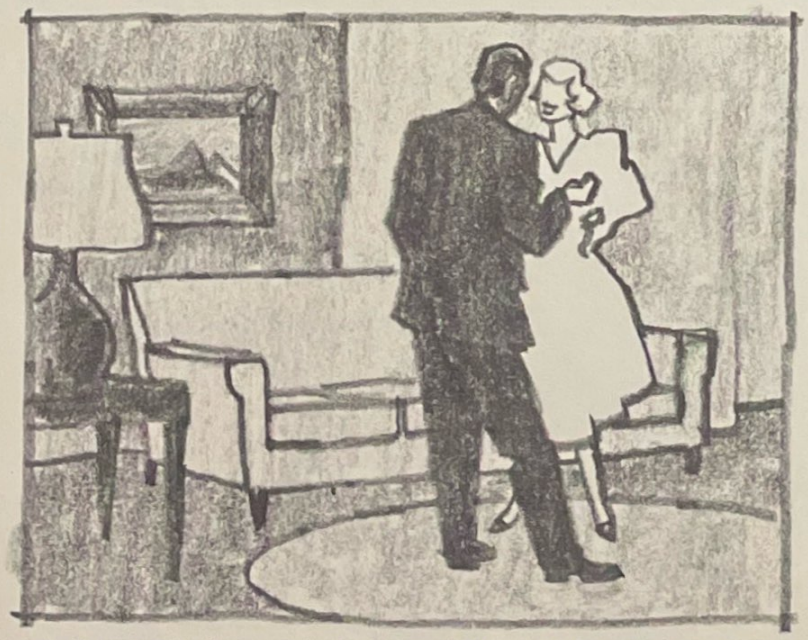
Every element of the interior must be looked at in terms of how it will work in your illustration – not how well it fits the decorative scheme of an actual room. Remember, you are an illustrator – not an interior decorator. Never feel that you have to draw the pattern or texture of chairs, drapes, rugs, etc., just as you find them. Instead, change, subordinate, or omit anything that doesn't contribute to your composition.



Here the pattern of the furnishings is entirely too busy. The drape tends to camouflage the woman's dress, making her hard to see, and so does the pattern on sofa and rug. The picture on the wall is too important.



Changing the dress and the drape and rug to solid tones eliminates confusion. We add a gray tone to the wall to make the picture hold its place, but now the sofa becomes the dominant element — the center of interest.



Here the pattern has been completely eliminated. The sofa no longer stands out — but neither does anything else. In attempting to solve our problem we have gone too far. The whole picture seems flat and uninteresting.

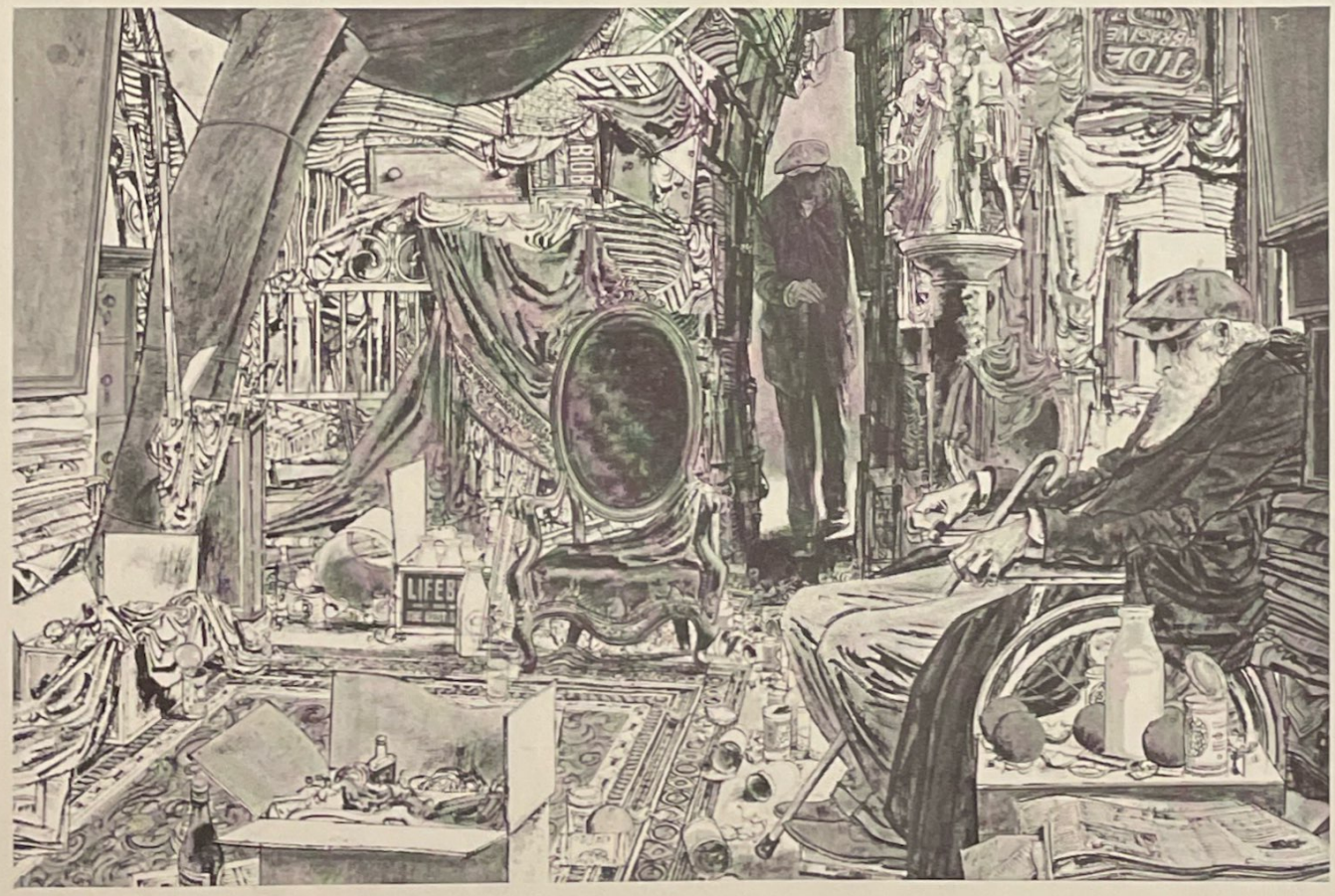
Here's a good solution. We bring back some of the patterns on the drape and sofa so they hold their secondary place without being flat and dull. And we make the girl a dominant element by restoring the pattern on her dress.

Here are three examples of how the points made on the facing page are applied in actual illustrations. The textures and pattern in each scene are handled quite differently by each artist to express the mood and feeling of his picture.

Albert Dorne: In this complicated interior of a general store the artist has organized the multitude of objects to create an over-all texture that frames the figures. The forms of the children, in particular, stand out because they have been set against the simple, contrasting floor area. Like the Fawcett illustration below, this picture could easily have become a scene of confusion and clutter without Dorne's careful organization of quiet and busy areas of texture.

© The Curtis Publishing Co., Inc.

Norman Rockwell: This rural classroom is simply and plainly furnished. Still, it is a room with a warm, friendly atmosphere — an environment for children. The children grouped around the teacher form a rich, busy area of texture set against the quiet plainness of the floor, windows and wall. The children's pictures have been carefully placed to relieve the bareness of the wall without interfering with the figure group, which is the main center of interest.



Courtesy Good Housekeeping

Robert Fawcett: Texture plays a tremendously important role in this picture, drawn to illustrate a story about two eccentric brothers who lived amid indescribable squalor and disorder. Although the room in the story was a complete chaos, the picture of it had to be organized. Fawcett established order by relieving the busy, active areas, which dominate the design, with areas of quiet shape and texture, like the chair in the center, the dark frame of the corridor, and the equally dark figure. Without these few resting spots for our eye a picture with this much detail would be a jumble of meaningless textures.

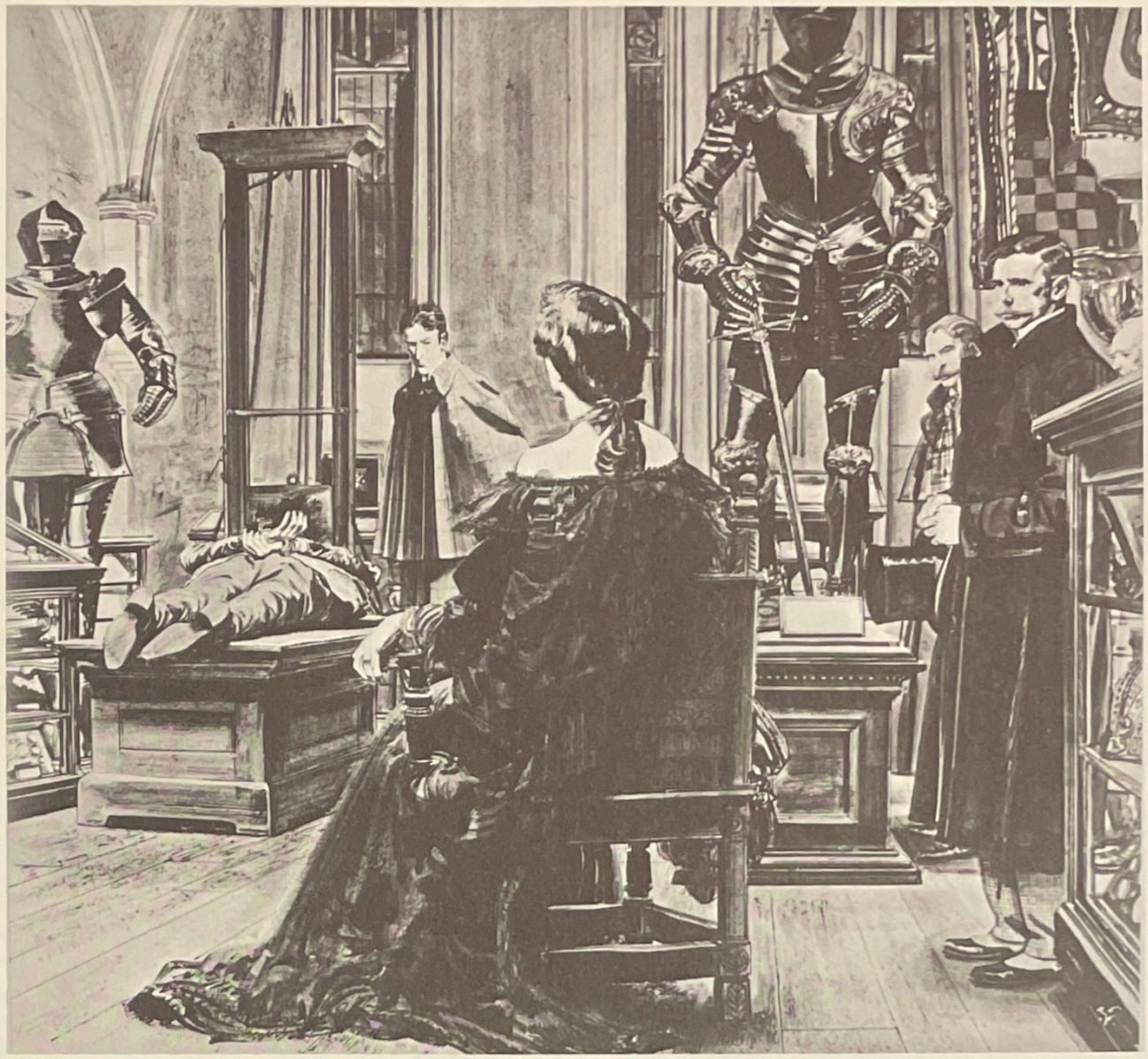
Interest creates interest

The pictures on these pages were painted by Robert Fawcett to illustrate the stories of Sherlock Holmes, famed detective of fiction. In the opinion of the country's foremost art directors and editors, these pictures rank among the finest in the history of American illustration.

Notice the settings in these paintings. Not only is each room realistic and convincing — it is intriguing as well. Fawcett knows that people enjoy looking at the interesting details of interiors like these, and he lavishes just as much care on them as he does on his figures. In making these pictures he was helped by his long love of London past and present — he studied art in that city — and by his strong sense of theater, which fitted the melodramatic situations and colorful settings of the subjects perfectly.

These pictures were a labor of love for Fawcett, and that is why they are so successful. They offer clear proof that the greater the interest you take in the setting — in your research to establish the facts, in your planning and composition, and in your actual rendering — the better the picture will be.

This interior, the study of Sherlock Holmes in his lodgings on Baker Street, had to be right — readers of the Holmes tales know their subject very well and would spot anything out of place. Fortunately, Fawcett discovered that this room had actually been reconstructed for a British Empire exposition and photos were available to work from. Notice that he has used the windows to show the buildings across the street and suggest the character of the neighborhood.



This scene takes place in an old chapel converted into a museum. The mention of armor and flags in the story triggered Fawcett's imagination; the setting owes much of its drama to the way he has arranged them. Just a hint of exhibition cases identifies the museum. The woman, with her back to the viewer, heightens the sense of mystery.

In the story for which this illustration was made, the chatter of birds in a cage draws the attention of the men to a huge spider climbing out of a stove. Fawcett featured this interesting cage as a design element for the upper half of the picture. The borders of the rug lead to the overturned table and the figures, and Holmes' gesture creates a strong feeling of tension and excitement.

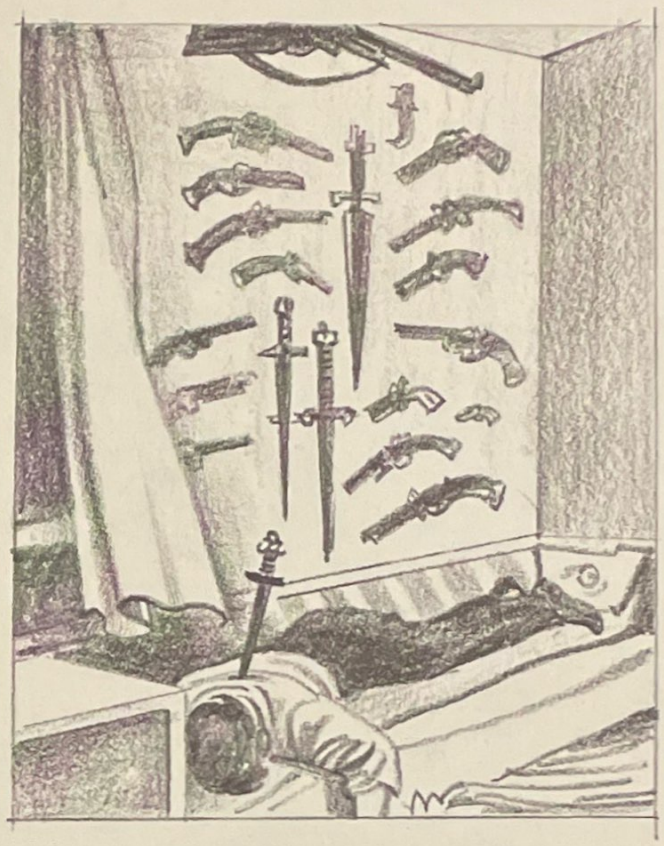
Making the interior interesting

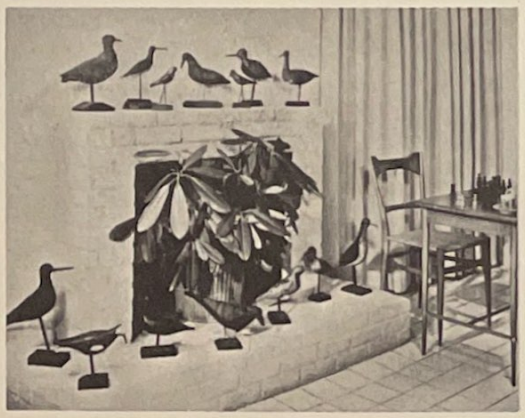
A unique setting can often make a unique illustration. Always be on the lookout for unusual backgrounds — interesting interiors that can add a real touch of freshness and originality to your pictures. Naturally, such settings must be appropriate — sheer novelty is not enough. In fact, if you feature it too boldly, it can divert attention from the main subject.

Wherever you go or whatever you see, notice the settings and furnishings. When anything strikes you as having possibilities for a background, make an effort to remember it or note it down in a sketch. Then, if the right picture situation comes up, you'll be ready to make the most of it. You'll know where to find the unusual beamed ceiling you need, the colorful display of swords and banners or trophies, the remarkable rug, wallpaper or drapery patterns that would create the exact note you want. Books, magazines, museums, theaters, television — all of these offer material you can use effectively in your backgrounds.

Courtesy Good Housekeeping

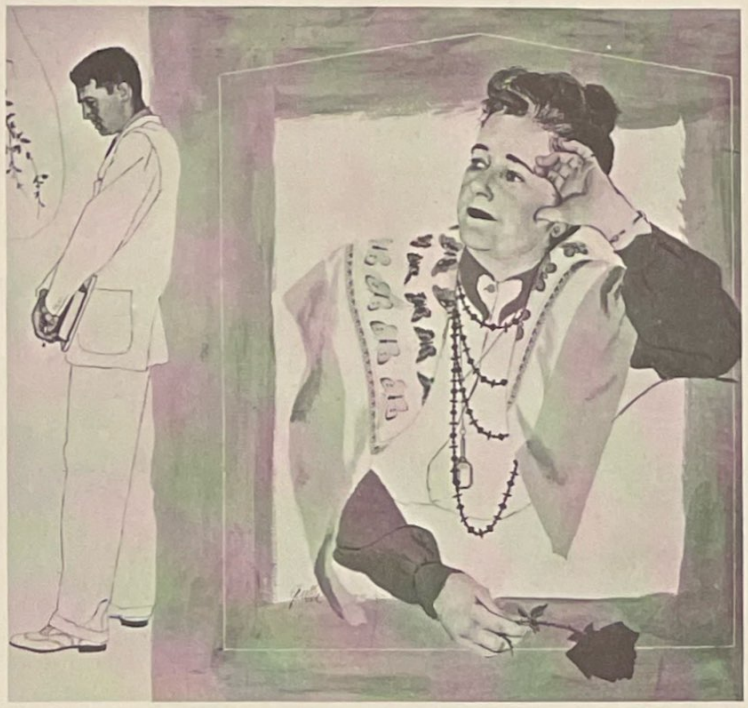
Here's the kind of setting we mean. The display of weapons in the photo might well add atmosphere to a murder-story illustration. You don't have to use the whole scene as it is — simply take from it what will strengthen your idea. Leave out or change whatever might confuse or weaken it. For example, in the sketch the bookcase has been omitted and the wind-blown curtain added for drama and as a compositional line leading down to the figure. Note that the swords have also been grouped to carry the eye to the figure.





This unusual treatment of a hearth and fireplace is another example of an interior which can add to an illustration. Again, just part of the view is used in our sketch — the most interesting part, showing the birds and plant. The birds, like the knives in the drawing above, have been arranged to keep our attention moving in toward the figure. The artist has arbitrarily added the suggestion of a beamed ceiling, which also draws our eye to the head.

Courtesy McCall's

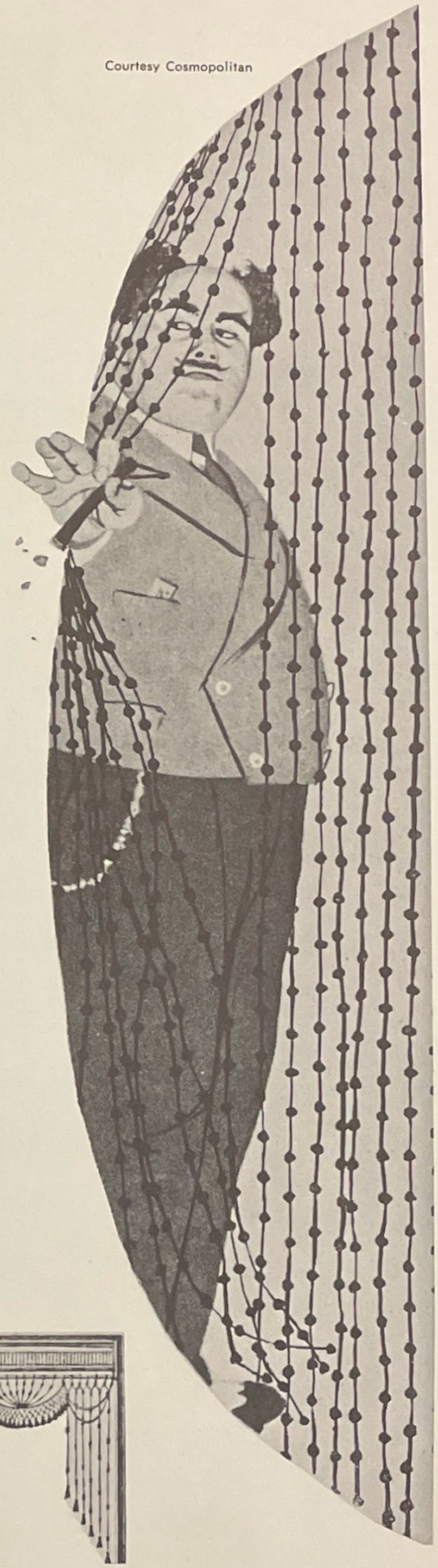


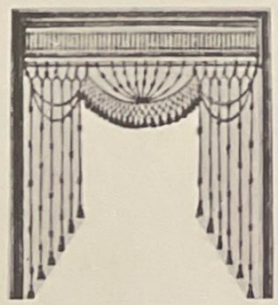
Here the interesting prop is a scarf with a butterfly design. Since the illustration is fairly simple, with few elements and no background, the scarf provides an intriguing bit of pattern that animates the whole picture.

© The Curtis Publishing Co.

In this illustration a statue, minus its head, strikes a frightening note — symbolic of the tragedy that occurs in the story. Parker placed the statue so that the line of the wall emphasizes its headlessness. He had photographed the statue long before, feeling that some day it might prove useful in a picture.

Courtesy Cosmopolitan





A nineteenth-century beaded drapery furnished the inspiration for this over-all pattern — which, in combination with the figure, suggests that there are sinister plans afoot.

a parker

Some devices that create interest

Al Parker's work has always been characterized by his ingenious use of the "stopper" — a device in his picture which stops the page turner and makes him study the illustration.

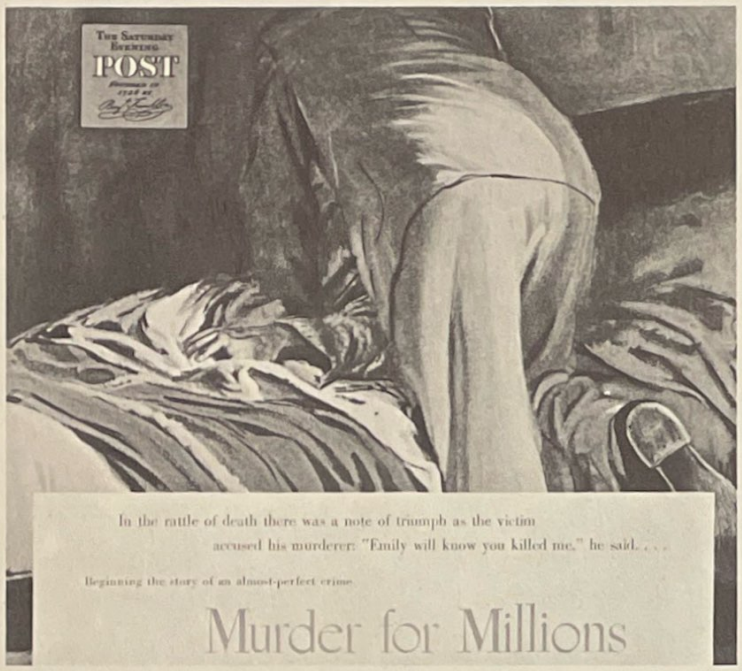
On this page are three examples of such stoppers, interesting props which add a special quality to Parker's illustrations, whether they be of landscapes, interiors or simply people.

The picture idea comes first

Austin Briggs

1 As this sequence demonstrates, the picture idea comes first — anything else is incidental. In a friend's home Austin Briggs found the fascinating array of props pictured above, and it struck him as just what he needed for a picture he was working on. He dug up a curious old bedstead and several lamps to complete the setting. It intrigued him so much that he decided to build the picture around it.

© The Curtis Publishing Co.


The Saturday Evening
POST
In the rattle of death there was a note of triumph as the victim
accused his murderer: "Emily will know you killed me," he said. . . .
Beginning the story of an almost-perfect crime
Murder for Millions

2 He had carried the painting well along toward the finish before he realized he was painting the setting instead of the story. Here the only visible figure, the murderer, is pulled too far over on the right. That he is strangling a figure on the bed is not clear; his victim is so obscured that the page-flipper would hardly realize what is taking place.

3

Briggs threw out his first sketch and posed the figure of the murderer over again. This time the artist concentrated almost entirely on the action. The finished painting owes much of its effect to its artistic economy. There are no extraneous props here.

© The Curtis Publishing Co.

Chandler

Avoid making a composition in which your characters and scene are engulfed by shapes of lights and darks that obscure the picture story. A picture should communicate the artist's idea, and the background must not be allowed to interfere. At the left you see an illustration in which this rule has been disobeyed; when changed as at the right, the picture tells its story readily.

Courtesy Better Homes and Gardens

FAMOUS ARTISTS COURSE
Student work
Lesson 11
Landscapes and interiors

HOW TO PRACTICE AND PREPARE FOR THIS LESSON

In this lesson, you have seen that the landscapes and interiors in most illustrations are essentially settings or backgrounds for the major subject, usually figures or products. We have also shown you how to use these settings to explain and support the mood, locale, or situation of the major subject -- to give it strength and meaning.

Here are some suggestions for practice that will help you get the most out of this lesson:

1. Fill the pages of your sketchbook with drawings made directly from nature. Nothing will take the place of first-hand experience in observing and drawing.

2. Look through books or magazines (Holiday, National Geographic, etc.) that contain photos of various regions of this country or other parts of the world. Analyze the character of these various places as we do on pages 4 through 7. Also notice how time and the elements affect each scene. Review pages 10 through 13 as you study these photos.

3. Working from dull or uninteresting snapshots or photos like those on pages 14 and 15, try to find the key to interest in each one as Robert Fawcett did. Then select and organize the view as shown on pages 16 and 17.

4. Look through magazines for various types of interiors. Analyze the characteristics of each room, and picture the kind of people that might live in it (see page 24).

5. Make sketches of various interiors from actual on-the-spot observation as well as from photos. In some, concentrate on careful construction of the scene (page 25). Vary your viewpoint for different effects (pages 26 and 27) and make tonal studies of interiors under different lighting conditions (page 28).

6. Select a few furnishings of your own at home and sketch them in various views and arrangements such as those you see on page 30.

7. Finally, restudy page 32 and make interior sketches in which you control the textures and patterns -- subduing some while emphasizing others. Photos in home magazines are excellent reference sources for this.

THE ASSIGNMENTS YOU ARE TO SEND IN FOR CRITICISM

ASSIGNMENT 1. Make an illustration which symbolizes one of the major regions of the country, such as the Southwest, the Midwest, the Northeast, etc. This illustration will be used in an advertisement featuring and promoting the virtues of the area. Your illustration should therefore be a landscape showing a characteristic and interesting aspect of the region. (Before doing this landscape, be sure to restudy pages 4 through 7.) If you include any figures, they should also be characteristic of the region.

Along with your illustration, send us the reference material from which you worked -- clippings from your file, sketches you made, or photos you took. Do not send more than three pieces. Make your drawing 9 x 12 inches in wash, line and wash, or opaque on an 11 x 14-inch illustration board. Under your picture print the name of the region you have illustrated.

Mark both the drawing and the reference material -- ASSIGNMENT 1.

ASSIGNMENT 2. Using the photo on Plate 1 as reference, make an illustration of a young couple conversing in their living room. The woman should be seated, the man standing. Show this scene from any one of these definite viewpoints:

a. high eye level
b. normal eye level
c. low eye level

(Before starting, review page 26)

Keep the same general room and furniture arrangement as in the photo. You may, however, move in on the scene, take out some of the furnishings or add to them if you wish. (Review page 31.) You will find it helpful to use a couple of friends as models for this assignment and make sketches or photos of them.

Be sure the figures are viewed from an eye level consistent with the view you choose of the room.

(over, please)

Do this illustration in wash, line and wash or opaque. Make it 9 x 12 inches on an 11 x 14-inch illustration board.

Mark this drawing -- ASSIGNMENT 2.

Your work on these two assignments will be judged on how well you have applied the main points made in the study and practice section above.

Check
before mailing

IMPORTANT: Be sure to letter your name, address, and student number neatly at the lower left-hand corner of each assignment. In the lower right corner, place the lesson number and assignment number.

Your lesson carton should contain:

Assignment 1
Reference material for Assignment 1
Assignment 2
1 Return shipping label filled out completely

Mail this carton to:
FAMOUS ARTISTS COURSE, WESTPORT, CONN.